Football Premiership: Arsenal 3 Manchester United 2

Arsenal check United's march to glory

David Lacey

ARSENAL are not ready to accept the inevitability of a fifth championship for Manchester United in six seasons. This was made plain last Sunday with a victory achieved in exhilarating fashion when David Platt headed the winning goal eight minutes from the end.

The moment will have sent a sigh of relief through the Premiership. A day earlier, Blackburn Rovers reduced United's advantage at the top from four points to one; at Highbury Arsenal denied United the opportunity to reopen the gap and moved back above Rovers into second place.

So the contest will not be over by Christmas. "I think we had many supporters in the country today, including other managers," said Arsenal's Arsène Wenger after the match. "This result is good for the English game because it will stimulate interest in the Premier League." Alex Ferguson half agreed. "A one-horse race is not good for the game," he said. "Arsenal deserved to win on their second-half performance."

The champions' second league defeat of the season seemed unlikely once they had wiped out Arsenal's early 2-0 lead, but after half-time Ferguson's players were given a lesson in resilience and tenacity.

Arsenal's success was all the more surprising for being achieved without Dennis Bergkamp, who was suspended along with Emmanuel Petit. Had these two been available Platt would not have started the match.

Exceptional circumstances often lead to exceptional performances and last Sunday Ray Parlour led the second-half revival which broke up United's effortlessly superior passing patterns of the first. And when United did begin to reassert their earlier pressure Tony Adams's command in defence was absolute.

Until half-time — and despite Arsenal's two goals — the game was dominated by the passing of Paul Scholes and the ease with which Teddy Sheringham came away from defenders to lay the ball off in all directions.

After Sheringham had found the net twice in eight minutes to make the score 2-2 at half-time, visions of United's recovery at Derby, and Arsenal's subsequent 3-0 defeat on the same ground, were strong in the mind's eye. But Wenger changed his system and United never reproduced their earlier fluency.

Fearing that the pace of Andy Cole would punish his defence, Wenger began with Steve Bould on the bench and Gilles Grimandi partnering Adams at centre-back. But at half-time Bould replaced the injured Patrick Vieira, which meant that Arsenal switched to three at the back with their full-backs Lee Dixon and Nigel Winterburn pushing on to the United wingers Ryan Giggs and David Beckham.

The result was significant, especially for Giggs, who started to give the ball away with such regularity that Ferguson replaced him with Ole Solskjaer 19 minutes from time.

Gary Pallister aggravated a back problem towards the end of the first half and gave way to Ronny Johnsen.

Arsenal's first two goals surprised Highbury and shocked United. After eight minutes an attempted shot from Marc Overmars rebounded to Nicolas Anelka, who cut inside before driving his first goal for Arsenal between Peter Schmeichel and the near post. In the 27th minute Adams headed on a corner from Parlour, and Vieira met the ball with a swerving shot that hit the roof of the net.

United merely carried on passing and two minutes past the half-hour Gary Neville's cross found Sheringham perfectly placed to nod the ball past David Seaman. Eight minutes later, a superb piece of improvisation saw Nicky Butt head Schmeichel's clearance down to Giggs, whose backheeled flick was met by Sheringham with a firm shot into the corner.

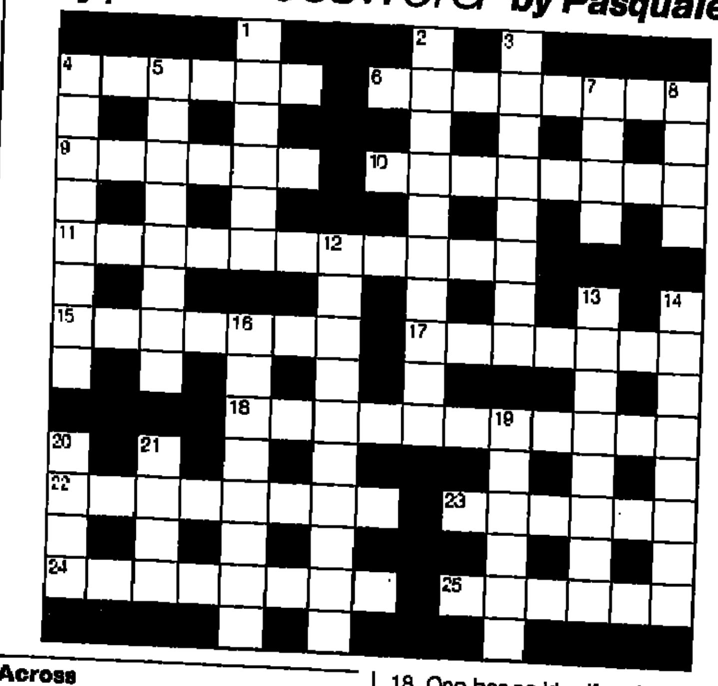
In the 82nd minute Christopher Wreh, who had replaced Anelka, saw a shot deflect off Gary Neville before Schmeichel, changing direction, made a masterful save.

But from the subsequent corner taken by Parlour, Platt rose above everybody to head Arsenal's winner. Wright then gave Wreh a chance to put the contest finally beyond the opposition's reach but he dragged the ball wide from six yards.

The game was soured by two missile-throwing incidents at the end of the first half. One person was arrested after Winterburn had been struck and a few seconds later Schmeichel appeared to be hit above the eye.

Tall order . . . Manchester United's Phil Neville (centre) fails to keep out David Platt's looping header that gave the north London side victory at Highbury PHOTOGRAPH: TONY HARRIS

Cryptic crossword by Pasquale



Across

4 Artificial covering quite hot but not right for tribal dwelling (6)
6 Delta region dispute settled by river (8)
9 Money collected by children talking (6)
10 Old Italian city either side of river — pretty-pretty (8)
11 Does war film lead to a confession of speech-lessness? (5,4,2)
15 Idle type left with nothing besides 'ankering for grub (7)
17 Put into office at home, employ delaying tactics (7)
18 One has no idea if one's that inconsiderate (11)
22 Beast pocketing profit isn't one noted for 3 down (8)
23 Vehicle sat initially on the shelf (6)
24 See drips in spray — what do they do? (8)
25 Game where stones are removed? (6)

Down

1 Cold one welcomed in by word of pity, a word from Mary's heart (6)
2 Being surprised when poet has swigged gin (10)
3 Justice, a quality preferred by gentlemen? (8)
4 We turned over blossom to find a monster (8)
5 One's urge when in trouble to be noble-minded (8)
7 Shallow and insincere nonsense endlessly served up (4)
8 Pitcher from Baltimore we remember (4)
12 Tip-top Greek character's female attendant on journey (3,7)
13 Librarian maybe holds old Bible to be something fragrant (8)
14 Bombastic brute, sly, nasty (8)
16 Around that place biblical tribe assembled (8)
19 Powder with aluminium and carbon to line stomach (6)
20 Retired in Lincoln, then died (4)
21 Bustle gives female upper skirt support primarily (4)

Last week's solution

DETEST ESTANCIA
I O H C U O D
COPPER BOTTOMED
E F L T I P R
GOODFENCESMAKE
R U X H M R S
COMICSTRIP MESS
L K R R U E
IMPI MARIONETTE
N R E D S C O
GOODNEIGHBOURS
F F C T G T S
INFRADIG AUGUST
L E S O I R A
MERCHANT ADVERB

Boxing IBF heavyweight championship

Holyfield turns on the power

John Rawling in Las Vegas

THE indomitable spirit which takes possession of Evander Holyfield at the sound of the bell and the sight of a boxing ring propelled him to another stirring victory as he stopped Michael Moorer in eight dramatic rounds here last Saturday.

Moorer was floored five times before the referee Mitch Halpern called a merciful halt on the advice of the ring doctor. Although the International Boxing Federation champion claimed he was fit to come out for another round, he was, by then, taking a fearful battering and would have been in danger of suffering serious injury.

So Holyfield, already holder of the World Boxing Association version of the belt, is in sight of a unification fight against the World Boxing Council champion Lennox Lewis. Negotiations have already begun with a possible date of April 24 in Las Vegas being mentioned.

Such was the emphatic manner of Holyfield's victory that he will undoubtedly fancy his chances of realising his last major ambition in boxing, to become undisputed heavyweight champion, but Lewis dismissed the contest here as "pretty mediocre".

Moorer found to his cost that the 35-year-old Real Deal not only hits back but is able to return aggression with interest and it quickly became apparent that the 1997 vintage Holyfield would not suffer a repeat of his 1994 humiliation when Moorer gained a points verdict over him. Only in the opening round, when the podgy Moorer nailed him with a right hook, did Holyfield look in trouble.

A clash of heads left Holyfield's right eyebrow cut in the third, but his cornermen were able to staunch the flow of blood. Holyfield anxiously dabbed his glove against the wound but all his problems were forgotten when he found his first big punch in the fifth, a perfectly timed right cross which sent the Detroit man to the canvas for the first time.

Two rounds later, the result became inevitable. Moorer was knocked down twice as Holyfield crashed right uppercuts into his jaw, the damage having been done when he was suckered in and left on jelly legs after a left hook thundered into his temple as Holyfield exploded off the ropes.

Holyfield paid tribute to Moorer's will to win. "I hit him with good shots. He went down but got up and fought even harder. He's a technician and I take my hat off to him."

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The Washington Post Le Monde

Egypt devastated by Luxor massacre

Julian Borger in Luxor

SAID Ahmed Gassem saw them first. Six men wearing jackets, despite the wet heat, and red headbands. As they walked by him towards the towering edifice of Hatshepsut's tomb he held out his hand and asked for their tickets. He believes it is a miracle it was not the last thing he ever did.

"One of the men opened his jacket and said: 'Here's my ticket.' He pulled out a machine-gun and began to fire. I had three friends with me and they fell to the ground on top of me. They're all dead," Mr Gassem, a temple guard, aged 40, said from his bed in Luxor's hospital on Monday night. His sky-blue turban and gown were bloody from bullet wounds to his elbow and hip.

Mr Gassem, who was standing at the entrance to the first platform of the three-tier temple, believes he was shot at about 9am. The bullets that struck him seem to have been the first in a killing spree along Luxor's Valley of the Kings just as it was buzzing with buses full of tourists who had risen early to see the ancient wonders in the morning light.

Sixty-eight people were killed, 60 of them foreign tourists, in the bloodiest attack of its kind Egypt has seen. Japanese, Swiss, French and Germans were the principal victims. The UK Foreign Office confirmed that six Britons were among the dead, with a further two missing.

The atrocity has critically damaged Egypt's vital tourist industry and shattered government claims to have dealt with the terrorism threat.

From his hospital bed, surrounded by relatives, Mr Gassem said: "I just lay there pretending to be dead. They walked past me up the ramp to the burial chamber and the shooting went on for 20 minutes. I heard all the shots echoing. The people who were still moving they finished off with knives and cut their throats. I had no doubt they would kill me."

After a while the scene of carnage fell quiet. Mr Gassem got to his feet and fled, not daring to look behind him.

The killers had moved on. From eyewitness accounts it is clear they were out to kill as many people as possible. As they ran out of Hatshepsut's 3,400-year-old tomb they opened fire on people in souvenir shops. Witnesses and police said the killers had arrived in a hijacked blue Peugeot taxi. They jumped back in the taxi and sped off. According to unconfirmed accounts, they hijacked a bus full of Japanese tourists, opening fire on its passengers as it moved along. They are then reported to have switched to a bus carrying French, Swiss and German tourists, killing several.

At some point they flagged down an empty bus being driven by Hajaj el-Nahass. He confirmed the six men were wearing red headbands bearing an inscription. The only word he could make out was "destruction".

They shot him in the leg and commandeered his bus. "They got on and told me to take them out of the valley. I drove around hoping the police would come. They realised what I was doing and one of them hit me in the back with the butt of his rifle. At last we got to a police checkpoint. Five of them got off and shot at the police. One stayed on the bus with a gun pointed at the back of my head. I tricked him. I told him: your friends are calling you, they have been hurt. He ran off and I drove away."

Some reports say the surviving gunmen fled into the hills. Others say they were pursued and shot by the police; others that they shot each other to avoid capture.

About 100 Egyptians gathered at the temple as police brought in the bloody bodies of three attackers. Some spat on the corpses. Others shouted "No to terrorism".

Luxor, normally a tranquil tourist town, was in shock on Monday night, with police checkpoints and hardly any traffic. The town was under curfew after a round-up of suspects in Egypt's worst collision between the tourism industry and Islamic fundamentalism.

Although there was no immediate claim of responsibility there was little doubt that the attack was the work of the Gama'a al-Islamiya (the Islamic Group) — the main movement behind a five-year campaign to overthrow the secular government and turn Egypt into an Islamic state.

The attack will have a catastrophic impact on Egypt's $3 billion-a-year tourism industry as it gears up for the January high season.

Travel companies immediately began suspending trips to Egypt and flying out tourists. Luxor is one of Egypt's top tourist destinations, famous for its gigantic Pharaonic-era temples on the east bank of the Nile. On the west bank — where the attack took place — are hundreds of royal tombs, including that of the boy-king Tutankhamun.

Until this week Luxor had remained free of the armed ambushes that are a hallmark of the Islamic militants in which 1,100 people have died, including 34 foreign tourists, since 1992. The tourism industry had appeared to shrug off the last attack, in September, which claimed nine victims in Cairo.

1km
Tomb of Tutankhamun
Deir el-Bahri (Temple of Hatshepsut)
Valley of The Queens
Cairo
Luxor
EGYPT
Luxor
1 9.15am (7.15 GMT) Gunmen concealed at Temple of Hatshepsut attack tourists arriving in buses
2 They hijack bus killing Japanese passengers. Hijack second bus, killing Swiss, French and German passengers
3 Gunmen cornered by security forces and killed at the Deir el Maharib Temple in the Valley of The Queens



Egyptian soldiers prepare to move the body of one of the Islamic militants who took part in the massacre PHOTO: MOHAMED EL-DAKHAKHNY

David Hirst in Beirut writes: Until recently the Egyptian government was convinced that it was breaking the back of its five-year Islamist insurgency. Perhaps it is. The evidence has certainly pointed in that direction. The number of killings of terrorists, police and civilians peaked at 343 in 1995, and fell to 184 in 1996.

The Gama'a al-Islamiya had clearly been driven back to the Upper Egyptian regions where the movement took root, and where desperate poverty, a tradition of vendettas and favourable terrain suit a rearguard action.

In July, a group of jailed old-guard leaders of the Gama'a and another Islamist group, Jihad, urged their followers to lay down their arms. Other leaders endorsed the call, including the Gama'a's spiritual chief, Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, from his prison cell in New York.

Then came September's attack on German tourists in Cairo. Nine died when three gunmen set fire to a bus outside the Cairo Museum.

The government passed off this severe shock, not very plausibly, as the isolated act of a "madman" and his brother. It had nothing to do with the Islamic "terror", it said.

Monday's massacre was outside another shrine, the Temple of Hatshepsut, which last month hosted a glittering performance of Verdi's Aida to consecrate the tourist industry's triumphant comeback.

This was terror on a truly "Algerian" scale, the most devastating attack since the insurgency began.

The government will argue that the very barbarism and scale of the violence are evidence of the perpetrators' suicidal desperation.

That they have grown more brutal — more "Algerian" in style — is without doubt. After the Aida performance terrorists killed nine policemen, binding them hand and foot, and machine-gunning their heads to a pulp.

The government will also argue that such gratuitous savagery is characteristic of dissidents who try to make up in horror what they lack in intrinsic strength.

The flaw in these arguments is that Islamic activism has come in waves, and the dying gasps of one generation can be the stirrings of a new — more violent — one.

As a human rights activist said: "The old generation may be tired, but even if only one in 10 of the younger ones are ready to go on, that is enough to pass on the torch to a whole new generation."

Comment, page 14

China's key dissident exiled to US

Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong

WEI JINGSHENG, China's most cogent and courageous voice for democracy, was released from jail last weekend and sent to the United States for medical treatment.

Nominated for the Nobel peace prize, Mr Wei, aged 47, is China's foremost dissident and has spent all but six months of the past 18 years in jail — mostly in solitary confinement — a trauma recorded in his recently published prison writings. Many lesser-known figures remain in jail.

A former soldier and Beijing Zoo electrician, Mr Wei vowed never to leave China. But his family, whom he met near the airport before boarding a plane for Detroit, said ill health left him no choice. Mr Wei suffers from heart trouble, high blood pressure, rotting gums and other ailments aggravated by repeated beatings in outposts of the Chinese gulag.

"He is firm and unshakeable. No situation would make him give up his pursuit of his ideals," said his sister, Wei Ling. "He thinks the sacrifices he has made for a just cause are worthwhile."

On his arrival in Detroit, Mr Wei was taken to the Henry Ford Hospital to be treated for high blood pressure and other problems. Doctors described him as being in a fair but stable condition.

Mr Wei's release on "medical parole" was widely seen as a gift to President Bill Clinton, who ignored a barrage of criticism to host a state visit to Washington this month by the Chinese president, Jiang Zemin.

Human rights groups in the US called on Beijing to free thousands of others jailed for religious, political and ethnic dissent.

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 6
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3.500	Switzerland	SF 3.80

Does Gaia make the world go round?

WHEN it comes to inventing brilliant gadgets that work to the good of humanity, James Lovelock has undoubted genius, and I thank Fred Pearce for bringing this to our attention (Visionary inventor, November 2). But before naively claiming that Lovelock's greatest achievements are in biology, Pearce would do well to read (further than the cover) one or two of the popular biology texts written by the real biologist Richard Dawkins, whom he dismisses as "Thatcherite". What he neglects to tell us is that Dawkins's work has been a vital cog in the machinery of modern evolutionary theory, a theory that has exposed the biological principles that made possible, indeed imperative, the social life and moral behaviour he is depicted as abhorring.

Despite the ensuing tirade of trendy science jargon that Pearce adduces in support of Gaia theory, readers with a shred of biological literacy would not have been fooled. It failed to hide the fact that Gaia theory is utterly forlorn unless it addresses the question of how the Earth came to possess its alleged abilities to respond to and regulate its own environment.

In biology-speak, these are planetary-level adaptations: but how did they evolve? The answer, of course, could only come from discovering how the Earth might have triumphed over rivals in a process of inter-planetary natural selection. Ironically, if Lovelock really wishes to make a contribution to biology, he would do best to return to Nasa and try his hand at some field work in outer space.

Scott Field,
Hebrew University of Jerusalem,
Rehovot, Israel

CONGRATULATIONS for a well deserved and long overdue tribute to James Lovelock, not because he is such a nice fellow but for his many "little" contributions. The problem between him the scientific establishment is thought to be semantic (sic). He initially and unfortunately described the geosystem as a self-regulating "organism" instead of a self-regulating "system". The former has a teleological connotation that displeases. The real problem, however, is that Lovelock's uses of Ockham's razor is of such finesse as to put the establishment to shame.

Global warming, forest management, biodiversity, cloud formation, etc, are well explained through Gaia. The Gaia hypothesis is a provocative way of looking at the process of life on Earth, and to which all sorts of investigations in different fields can be referred. Is that not what a scientific theory supposed to be?

(Prof) C-Rene Dominique,
Quebec City, Canada

SO, JAMES LOVELOCK ought to get the Nobel prize. I wonder in which category. The gadgets he has invented don't seem to qualify for the science one. As for his "greatest invention", the Gaia hypothesis, it can take several readings. At one level it's a poetic rendering of classic ecological themes but not quite up to the standard of the Nobel Prize for Literature. At another, it depicts our planet controlling itself, a sort of secular pantheism. And there are no Nobel prizes for re-inventing God.

A Digon,
Viloria, Spain

Lonely, but not alone

WILL HUTTON seems to have been talking to too many lonely Australian politicians (Australia, land of sun, surf — and loneliness, November 9) because the things he conjectures about are, typically, those favoured by ardent members of whichever the opposition party happens to be. Hutton's reported scene of our suburbs as endless grids of streets filled with abandoned factories and divorced middle-aged men watching television is exaggerated flimflam and ignores the diverse multicultural energy Australia maintains during its rapidly changing role in our Asian region.

Anxiety levels of Australians concerning their economic and social future I believe would be little different to the popular concerns for the future in any developed country. As for ensuing loneliness, is it more intense than that of other countries?

Michael Hutchison,
Port Melbourne, Australia

WILL HUTTON'S essay on Australian loneliness was put to the prime minister, John Howard, in a recent radio interview. Yes, it was a problem, he conceded, due largely to the breakdown of the "family" caused, *inter alia,* by the independence conferred on women by wage parity. Not a photon of enlightenment was detected here. Our best hope may be that a majority of Australians will twig to fact that economic rationalism is nothing more than a specious rationale for primitive selfishness, and that the conservative term "family" as the focus of nearly all personal obligation is effectively a repudiation of any responsibility, particularly financial, to the wider society.

John Hayward,
Weegena, Tasmania, Australia

WILL HUTTON'S view of Australia was both sympathetic and perceptive. Many Australians recognise the trend he describes. The image of the Australian as a robust and independent soul is out of focus in a society now dominated by accountants and lawyers, with a few social workers trying to stop the others falling off the edge.

Increasingly, we are asked to contemplate a future in which most of us are unemployed. One prediction suggests that 20 per cent of the population will provide for the other 80 per cent, who can sit out their days drawing welfare. A vote for the major parties in Australia is a vote for this level of unemployment and the social decay that will accompany it. They are all — Liberal, National and Labor parties — the proponents of economic rationalism.

Hilary Thompson,
Blackwood, South Australia

Russia's capital punishment

IF "NOBODY with even the remotest shred of intellectual credibility today believes in communism" (Communism's unsolved riddle, November 16) then I am glad I am not an intellectual. You launch into anti-communist rhetoric but you don't use the other "C" word. Capitalism in the former USSR has resulted in a frighteningly swift descent into barbarism for the majority of the people.

Russia's economy has halved since 1991 and now has a gross domestic product equivalent to that of the Netherlands. Male life expectancy was 69 in the late 1950s, exceeding that in the United States; it is now 58. It is the first country in history to experience such a sharp fall in life expectancy. A fifth of the population lives in poverty. The health-care system has collapsed and preventable diseases such as measles have reached epidemic proportions.

The truth about the attempts of the Soviet Union to build socialism cannot be uncovered without placing it within a world in which 538 people own half the wealth, while billions live with poverty, disease and hunger.

R Seymour,
Northwood, Middlesex

DOUBTLESS communism never took a strong hold over the post-war generation, particularly when the West appeared to offer such a bright alternative to the sepulchral gloom of a command economy that could not deliver a commensurate standard of living while retaining strong defences. But the misery for vast numbers of hitherto relatively well-off individuals has been a high price to pay to be allowed into the capitalist club.

The principle of organising society on the basis of "from each according to his ability to each according to his need" may have been rejected for now, but in a world of finite resources it is unlikely that such a precept will fall into perpetual disuse.

Bill Jackson,
Nottingham

Victims of the chain gang

MARIAN VAN TIL claims that the United States is so huge and culturally diverse that "anyone moving from one region to another is in for culture shock" (November 2).

I have lived in four different European countries. For the past 13 years, however, the US has been my home. While it is indeed huge, one of its most striking, and, to me, depressing aspects is its numbing cultural homogeneity. Franchised businesses and chain stores have almost wiped out regional cultural diversity, providing — as some claim with pride — identical clothing, food and consumer goods, irrespective of location. Indeed, if it were not for the obvious differences in climate and terrain, it would be hard to tell a strip mall in, say, Tucson, from one in Chicago, Boston or Seattle.

(Dr) Christopher T Knight,
Champaign, Illinois, USA

WHEN presented with the simple fact that the United States produces 25 per cent of the world's CO_2 while consuming 33 per cent of the world's resources, and that the government appears to resist any attempt to improve these figures by any useful margin, most people outside the US, whether ignorant of its social diversity or not, are faced with the basic conclusion that this particular 5 per cent of the world's population are doing more to hurry the destruction of our planet than any other single group. This is not anti-American. This conclusion is not a knee-jerk reaction, it is genuine concern for the future of our planet.

Simon Williams,
Kofu, Japan

Briefly

THE prospects for cheap world wide communication outlined are very exciting, and nowhere more welcome than in Africa (October 19). A year ago, there was no Internet access from Tanzania, it was impossible to telephone many other African countries, and a one-page fax to Europe cost $10. Today, despite the continued presence of the state-owned telecom monopolies, the Internet is opening up the continent and, through e-mail to fax gateways, the same correspondence from Dar es Salaam to London costs 24 cents. For small and medium-size companies this ability to access information and communicate quickly and reliably, considerably helps to level the playing field.

Peter Llewellyn,
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

RE "A tribe's suicide pact" (October 12). We in the West are familiar with the traditional political discourse that states it is of the highest moral duty and honour to die for one's country in defence of its values of freedom and justice, and united by a belief in one God. But how many of us living in so-called advanced capitalist societies would give our life for Mother Earth? Perhaps we will begin to rethink the values we have decided to live by so that we may become very clear about what it is we would be willing to die for.

Mark O'Shea,
Munich, Germany

DONALD BAKER writes that "Cuban artists . . . are required to give part of their earnings to the Castro regime" (November 2). I suppose that Baker has been required to give part of his earnings for writing this to the Clinton regime, just as I am required to give a sizeable proportion of my earnings to the Aznar regime here in Spain. At least in Spain, as in Cuba this money pays for universal education and health care and not for the most formidable war machine in the world.

Chris Boswell,
Tàrrega, Spain

YOUR article "Poisoned legacy" (November 2) makes chilling reading. What an opportunity for New Labour to write history anew. Public apologies, compensation for locals and troops, clean up the mess. Get to it, Tony! Unfortunately something tells me that this is not the way of the world.

Chris Wright,
Castelo Branco, Portugal

THE paperless office (October 26)? About as much chance as the paperless toilet.

Maison Urwin,
Nerima-Ku, Tokyo

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More than 1,000 die in Somali floods

Lucy Hannan in Nairobi and agencies

STRUGGLING to survive without a government, Somalia's people are now suffering another disaster. Extensive flooding in the Juba region in the south has destroyed hundreds of thousands of livelihoods and submerged whole villages. The floods have killed more than 1,000 people across the country and an estimated 220,000 have been forced to flee their homes, aid officials said on Monday.

Somalia has been without central government since the overthrow in 1991 of President Mohamed Siad Barre plunged the country into chaos. And the international community has been hesitant to launch a major aid mission in Somalia following the disastrous retreat of a United States-led United Nations mission in 1993.

Waters from the rain-swollen Juba and Shabelle rivers have merged to form an inland sea covering thousands of hectares, radio broadcasts said on Monday.

With no means to reach the victims, aid workers are mainly limited to using aerial surveys to watch the tragedy unfold. From a plane flying north along the Juba river, people could be seen waving frantically, marooned on roof-tops and tiny islets of dry ground.

This is Somalia's richest agricultural region, though the flooding comes on the heels of three bad harvests caused by drought and political instability. Maize fields, coconut groves and banana plantations are all under water.

In Lower Juba, floodwaters have engulfed the outskirts of the district capital, Jilib, and the nearby villages of Merere, Wamboy and Moofa.

A village on the bank of the Juba river in the south of Somalia is engulfed by floodwaters PHOTO CORINNE DUFKA

Groups of villagers gather on embankments, sheltering under plastic sheeting. Small fishing boats carrying survivors drift aimlessly.

"The worst is yet to come — and the villagers are almost certainly aware of that," said Renato Marai, a UN world food programme agronomist.

Those trapped in Lower Juba are likely to be hit by a second inundation as heavy rains wash into the already swollen rivers flowing down from the mountains in neighbouring Ethiopia. Torrential rains in Somalia have worsened the effect of the flooding from the Juba river.

Aid workers can only estimate the numbers of dead and displaced. Christopher Greco, agricultural officer for World Vision, was evacuated by helicopter from Buaale last week. Now, flying over the area, he expresses shock that whole communities seem to have disappeared. "I hope they got out," he said.

In Badera, Middle Juba, the floodwaters appear to be receding slightly. Aid planes can land, and food distribution to about 40,000 has begun. But the aid workers, debating how to reach the stranded people they have seen from the air, are faced with a multitude of logistical problems.

Airstrips are sodden, and many roads and bridges have disappeared. Boats could be flown in from Nairobi to the nearest dry airstrip, but would need expert handling in the dangerous river current. Food wrapped in plastic sheeting could be dropped near marooned villagers, but would be difficult for them to retrieve and distribute. Crocodiles and snakes, washed out of the river and into flooded fields and houses, are also a serious danger.

With no functioning central government, Somalia is relying on international aid agencies to respond to the crisis.

But since the failure of the international armed intervention in 1993, most international organisations have been reluctant to assist.

The UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, warned that hunger, malnutrition, malaria and diarrhoeal diseases were expected on a large scale and that up to 800,000 people may be affected. About $2.5 million is needed in the next few months for transport alone, he said.

Diplomacy paves way on Iraq

Martin Kettle in Washington

THE prospects for a diplomatic solution to the confrontation between Iraq and the United States strengthened significantly on Monday with the US and Britain offering a relaxation of economic sanctions against Baghdad as international moves to resolve the dispute over United Nations weapons inspectors continued.

Apparently signalling a reversal of US policy priorities in the current crisis, a senior official travelling with the secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, told reporters in Islamabad that the US, Britain and France were discussing the possibility of "modest adjustments" in the sanctions regime imposed on Iraq after the 1991 Gulf war, provided that Iraq complied with the inspection programme. The official said the changes could include broadening the range of items Iraq is allowed to spend money on, largely restricted to food and medicine; increasing the amount of oil sold, limited to $2 billion worth every six months; and extending the life of the programme from six months to a longer period.

British officials called the ideas "a major initiative" to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people, "with whom we have no quarrel".

Officials pursued the ideas last weekend with France and Russia with the intention of "solidifying the four key players".

On Monday, clearly alarmed that the statements from Islamabad and London were giving the impression that the US was preparing to back down, the White House stressed that there could be no reconsideration of sanctions until Iraq complied with last week's UN Security Council resolution. The defence secretary, William Cohen, said: "We are not seeking any deal."

No concessions would be offered to secure President Saddam's compliance.

Iraq's first reaction came in New York, where its UN ambassador, Nizar Hamdoon, was reported by CNN television as saying that the proposals did not go far enough. Mr Hamdoon called for a total lifting of sanctions, CNN said. In Washington, state department officials privately acknowledged that the proposals made in a Le Figaro newspaper interview by the Iraqi deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, for changes to the composition of UN weapons inspection teams might form the basis of a compromise.

The UN's chief weapons inspector, Richard Butler, said that changing the nationality of the inspector would not change the objectivity of the programme.

Russia confirmed that it was now working to ensure a peaceful solution to the weapons inspection crisis after a conversation between President Bill Clinton and President Boris Yeltsin.

Road to ruin, page 5
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Women win job ruling

Ian Traynor in Bonn and Stephen Bates in Brussels

IN a landmark ruling hailed as an historic victory for working women, the European Court of Justice last week dismissed a German teacher's complaint that he lost a promotion because of his sex.

The surprise ruling in favour of affirmative action found that deliberately preferring female job applicants in the public sector, when both male and female candidates were equally qualified, did not infringe sexual equality or equal opportunity regulations.

The Luxembourg court ruling went against the advice of the court's advocate-general, who had recommended the repeal of affirmative action laws in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia where the teacher works.

The verdict also went some way to reversing a court ruling in October 1995, which banned quotas for female employment as a means of redressing the imbalance of the sexes in the workplace.

The European Union social affairs commissioner, Padraig Flynn of Ireland, welcomed the ruling as a recognition of the obstacles confronting women in the world of work. "The vast majority of approaches to positive action which permit a degree of flexibility in their application and which stop short of rigid automatic quotas are not called into question," he said.

Lissy Groener of the European Parliament's women's rights committee said: "The judgment is a great victory for women."

The teacher, Helmut Marschall, took the authorities in North Rhine-Westphalia to court when he lost a promotion in 1994 because an equally qualified woman was given the job under "female promotion" rules. They state that "women are to be preferred [for a job vacancy] if they are of equal ability, qualification and suitability".

Mr Marschall has been under attack from feminists who claimed he wanted to return German women to "the kitchen sink". He denied the allegations, pointing out that his wife, who is also a teacher, was a working woman, and that he did his share of the housework.

The state referred the case to the European Court. In May, the court's advocate-general, Francis Jacobs, said the German state's affirmative action rules should be reversed because allowing women "absolute and unconditional priority" over men in competing for jobs was a form of discrimination.

Although it is customary for the court to heed the recommendation made by the advocate-general, the judges declared that equal suitability for a job still did not mean equal opportunity between the sexes. "Men tend to be chosen in preference to women, since they benefit from deep-rooted prejudices and from stereotypes as to the role and capacities of women," the judges found.

The Week

WASHINGTON has put its citizens abroad on a terror alert following the murder of four US businessmen in Karachi and threats against Americans elsewhere. It follows the guilty verdicts against two suspects in the World Trade Centre bombing and the mounting tension with Iraq.
Washington Post, page 19

THE alleged Nazi collaborator Maurice Papon has pneumonia, casting doubt on whether his trial for wartime crimes against humanity will resume, his lawyers said.

BURMA'S State Law and Order Restoration Council, which has ruled with an iron hand since 1988, announced that it was being replaced by the State Peace and Development Council.

NIGERIA'S military ruler, General Sani Abacha, said that he had dismissed his entire cabinet, the first wholesale change of ministers since he took power four years ago.

THE graves of up to 2,000 members of the Taliban militia apparently killed in fighting against an opposition alliance have been found in northern Afghanistan, the Afghan Islamic Press said. The dead are believed to be among the 3,000 Taliban prisoners taken by General Abdul Malik, who was briefly in an alliance with the Islamist militia.

PRESIDENT Jacques Chirac opened the seventh summit of nominally French-speaking countries in Hanoi with a call to arms against the linguistic, philosophical and creative uniformity dictated by the domination of English.
Lost for words, page 28

SINGAPORE'S appeals court has cut by almost half, to $8.1 million, damages awarded to the prime minister, Goh Chok Tong, and 10 of his colleagues for libel by an opposition politician, Tang Liang Hong.

NOBEL peace laureate Bishop Carlos Belo condemned the use of "excessive force" by Indonesian troops in East Timor after they stormed the university campus in the capital, Dili.

THE reputation of Mercedes as the ultimate in German engineering and safety suffered a serious setback after it withdrew its new 'A' class small car, which had proved unstable.

Correction
In our front page report on November 16 giving the decision of Judge Hiller Zobel in the Louise Woodward case we incorrectly quoted him as saying: "I do, however, recognise that mercy is no less than appropriate." What he actually said was, "mercy does not lessen opprobrium".

Pakistan PM denies charge of contempt

Tahir Ikram in Islamabad

NAWAZ SHARIF denied showing contempt for the judiciary on Monday when he became the first serving Pakistani prime minister to face the charge.

Mr Sharif said he had high esteem for the judiciary, with which he has been at loggerheads for months, but said: "I have neither committed contempt of court, nor do I intend to do that."

The case arises from remarks that Mr Sharif made when the supreme court suspended one of his first pieces of legislation, which outlawed the practice of deputies changing sides — something that has bedevilled Pakistani politics in the past.

On Monday night Mr Sharif's powerful Muslim League party met to introduce a bill allowing for an appeal against a contempt of court ruling, parliamentary sources said. They said no such right was in the constitution and the government would try to get one on the statute books shortly.

The move followed the prime minister's unprecedented personal appearance before the supreme court. Mr Sharif sat in court supported by his cabinet when counsel read out a statement denying contempt. It fell far short of the apology that some newspapers had said he would make to the court to defuse political tension.

Mr Sharif said the row was hurting the economy. "The uncertainty has adversely affected the process of the revival of the economy. The situation has caused negative impact in many other fields as well," he told reporters. The continuing confrontation between Sharif's nine-month-old government and the judiciary has dominated political life and unnerved investors.

Mr Sharif's statement said it was his duty to express his views on court rulings "in the light of varying opinions". "It is unfortunate if in the performance of my duty towards these obligations, any of my statements has been deemed by any learned judge to be in contempt," the statement said.

Mr Sharif told the Islamabad News newspaper last weekend that he was the victim of a conspiracy, but did not say who was behind it.

The Pakistani prime minister, who returned to power with a sweeping majority in February, has been at loggerheads with the country's chief justice, Sayed Sajjad Shah, over a variety of issues.

He performed an about-turn last month in a trial of strength with Chief Justice Shah over which of the two had the last word in the appointment of top judges. After weeks of refusing to back down, Mr Sharif told parliament it was up to the chief justice.

But days later, Chief Justice Shah said he would bring charges of contempt of court against Mr Sharif.

The prime minister is also being challenged in the supreme court over an anti-terrorism act he brought in earlier this year. It gives the police sweeping powers to combat rising violence which has claimed hundreds of lives in the past two years. — *Reuters*

Washington Post, page 19

Winnie begins her quest for power

David Beresford in Johannesburg

WINNIE MANDELA in effect launched her campaign for the deputy presidency of South Africa on Monday with a populist tirade against the leadership of the African National Congress.

The attack sets the scene for what some see as the last chance to block her rise to power. Public hearings on a string of murder allegations against her are due to be held by Bishop Desmond Tutu's truth commission next week.

President Nelson Mandela is believed to be battling behind the scenes to find ways of preventing his ex-wife from becoming deputy leader of the African National Congress at its triennial conference in December. The post is expected to fall vacant when the country's deputy president, Thabo Mbeki, takes over the leadership of the party preparatory to succeeding Mr Mandela as president.

Mr Mandela seems to have been instrumental in persuading the ANC leadership to throw its weight behind the party's KwaZulu-Natal chairman, Jacob Zuma, as Mr Mbeki's deputy. But there are doubts whether Mr Zuma can stave off Mrs Mandela's challenge.

The truth commission hearings into the "Winnie scandal" begin on Monday and are expected to last five days. She faces questioning about seven murders in which she is alleged to have been implicated. At recent in-camera hearings she is believed to have blamed President Mandela for much of the scandal surrounding her, accusing him of having "dug up dirt" to support his divorce action.

She is expected to claim that she is the victim of a smear campaign mounted during the apartheid era by a secret police unit, Stratcom, which specialised in "dirty tricks".

In a long and rambling interview with the Star newspaper in Johannesburg, Mrs Mandela expressed confidence that she would become South Africa's deputy president. In an apparent reference to a statement by Mr Mbeki that the deputy leader of the ANC did not necessarily become deputy president of the country, she said: "I know if my people want me to be deputy president I will be deputy president. It's as simple as that."

Attacking the ANC leadership on its two weakest fronts — crime and non-delivery to the black majority — Mrs Mandela said it was time for "the people" to govern. She was bitter in her criticism of the truth commission, accusing Bishop Tutu of applauding apartheid-era cabinet ministers who appeared before it — "the perpetrators of the worst brutality and atrocities any country has ever known" — while victimising her.

She was particularly vituperative in her comments on the British peer, Dame Emma Nicholson, who was instrumental in the publication of a recent book about a key witness in the Winnie scandal, Katiza Cebekhulu.

Arafat aides open battle for succession

David Sharrock in Jerusalem

A BATTLE for succession has begun among Palestinian rivals, amid persistent reports that Yasser Arafat's health is failing, an Arab newspaper reported last week.

The London-based Al Hayat said competition between various wings of the fledgling Palestinian security forces was intensifying, fuelled by rumours widely circulating in the West Bank that Mr Arafat is in physical decline.

A recent film of his trembling lip and shaking hands have led some to speculate that he is suffering from Parkinson's disease, a theory Mr Arafat has rejected as "complete nonsense".

Al Hayat, which has a reputation for independence and accuracy, suggests that two "young Turks" are preparing their bids for succession.

Djibril Rajoub, head of the preventive security services in the West Bank, is said by the newspaper to be building alliances and arming his followers. It claimed a $42,000 arms shipment was recently intercepted en route to his supporters in Ramallah.

The paper said the other contender, Mohammed Dahlan, Col Rajoub's counterpart in the Gaza Strip, was "making similar moves".

Between the two men are other security chiefs jostling for advancement, including the head of military intelligence, Mussa Arafat, the national security chief, Saeb Ajez, and the police general, Ghazi Jabali.

Al Hayat claims the battle for succession "could explode within several months and even take the form of political assassination".

That was a view nobody from the West Bank wished to endorse publicly last week. Ghassan Khattib, director of the Jerusalem media and communication centre, said the story about Mr Arafat's health had been "created" by the Israeli media. However, he conceded there had been "some discussion" about the succession. "But I don't sense any competition. The serious candidate is Abu Mazen."

Also known as Mahmoud Abbas, Mr Mazen led the recent negotiations with the Israelis in Washington. Al Hayat said he would be "a weak president, dependent on the security services and under the influence of Mohammed Dahlan and Mr Arafat's top economic adviser, Khaled Salam".

This view is shared privately by some Palestinian politicians. "Whoever succeeds Arafat will need a powerful backer with support from the streets," said one.



Palestinian police trainees show off their defensive skills during a graduation ceremony in Gaza PHOTO: FAYEZ NURELDINE

Pro-Islamist party faces extinction

Chris Morris in Ankara

THE constitutional court in the Turkish capital Ankara began hearing evidence last week on whether it should close down the largest party in parliament, the pro-Islamist Welfare party.

In a case that could have far-reaching implications for Turkey's image abroad, the country's chief prosecutor, Vural Savas, argues that Welfare has a hidden agenda to promote Islamic fundamentalism. "It is my duty under the constitution to protect the secular Turkish Republic," he said outside the court.

The Welfare party formed Turkey's first Islamist-led government until pressure from the military forced it out of office earlier this year.

The prosecutor, with backing from the military, says Welfare tried to undermine the secular state by encouraging Islamic education and placing supporters in the Turkish bureaucracy. He also says the Welfare leader and former prime minister, Necmettin Erbakan, forged alliances with countries such as Iran and Libya, which were detrimental to Turkish interests.

Mr Erbakan will respond to the chief prosecutor with more than 1,000 pages of evidence. He was expected to testify last week, but was granted an additional week to prepare his case. "He will make a strong defence," a party official said.

His advisers say Mr Erbakan will emphasise that a democratic country should not close down a party because of its beliefs. Other parties have been banned but never one with such wide appeal. Welfare won more than 20 per cent of the vote at the last election.

"I think the case is a foregone conclusion," said Ilnur Cevik, editor-in-chief of the Turkish Daily News. "I would be very surprised if Welfare emerges victorious because the powers behind the scene are determined to close it down."

If the party is banned, its supporters would probably regroup and form a new party under another name. However, leaders such as Mr Erbakan could be prevented from playing any active role in politics.

But there is a danger that Welfare supporters might turn to more radical methods if they see their political rights denied.

German leader rallies to immigrants

Ian Traynor in Bonn

GERMANY'S president, Roman Herzog, launched an impassioned, if oblique, attack last week on Chancellor Helmut Kohl's immigration policies a day after Mr Kohl killed attempts to reform the country's restrictive citizenship laws.

In a plea for greater dialogue between Germans and an immigrant community of more than 7 million — by far the biggest in Europe — Mr Herzog said the growing number of foreigners raised concerns about political representation, nationality laws and the school system.

"Many Germans can't get used to a process that has become long-practised experience for many other countries — the integration of new nationalities," he said in a speech in Berlin. "Many of our foreign fellow citizens were asked to come here by us, have become natives here, have been born and grown up here and contribute substantially to our economy and our culture."

Mr Herzog may have described immigrants as "fellow citizens", but the vast majority do not enjoy citizenship rights. They cannot vote, are not represented in local councils and are barred from most public-sector jobs. It is rare to find a "non-German" working on the railways, in the government bureaucracy, or on television. There is one MP of immigrant origin in the 672-strong Bonn lower house.

Weeks of emotional debate aimed at changing the law to give immigrant children born in Germany dual citizenship until the age of 18 ended abruptly last week when Mr Kohl's Christian Democrats voted against reform, killing the issue for the duration of the current parliament. The German chancellor had set himself squarely against the reform.

Croatian leaders silence press with lawsuits

Ian Traynor

WHEN President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia celebrated his 75th birthday this year, his courtiers and cronies staged a gala performance in his honour at the national theatre in the capital, Zagreb.

The highly regarded young Bosnian writer Miljenko Jergovic did not think much of the show, and said so. In a scathing review Mr Jergovic, the author of Sarajevo Marlboro, focused on the medieval sycophancy of the presidential entourage and ridiculed the show's artistic claims.

The doting treatment of the president, Mr Jergovic wrote, recalled the personality cults of the communist-era Soviet bloc.

Deploying what has become a blunt, if lucrative, instrument of repression in the hands of the Croatian regime, the targets of Mr Jergovic's pen promptly turned to the lawyers and the courts. Zlatko Vitez, playwright, presidential adviser, and co-author of the ode to Mr Tudjman, issued a libel writ against Mr Jergovic and the independent weekly magazine Tjednik, where his columns appear regularly.

Mr Vitez's claim to be suffering "spiritual pain" puts him in good company. Mr Tudjman, his family, and the Croatian government — individually and collectively — are all currently racked by spiritual pain, if the scale of their litigation is any index.

Feral Tribune, a satirical magazine, is contesting 34 writs for libel and defamation, most of them issued by members of the government. Were it to lose all the cases, the newspaper would face a potential bill of $2.7 million in damages.

The president's daughter, Nevenka, objected to a Feral article on her business activities. She stated publicly that she had not read the offending article, but is suing for $675,000.

Andrija Hebrang, the health minister, took personally a Feral article detailing the wretched conditions in a provincial hospital, so he sued for $135,000.

When the sensationalist weekly Globus reported that the United States consultancy firm Kroll had advised potential foreign investors that Croatia had "one of the most corrupt governments in the world", the entire cabinet sued the magazine.

Analyses by the European Commission and the German corporation Daimler-Benz have reached similar conclusions about rampant corruption in Croatia, but the local media risk bankruptcy if they report such findings.

Feral, which fearlessly lampoons the powerful while also specialising in war crimes and corruption investigations, has just received recognition of sorts. Its editor, Viktor Ivancic, won the US Committee for the Protection of Journalists award for independent journalism.

The award triggered an onslaught by the government-controlled media against Mr Ivancic and his newspaper, apparently without fear of the libel courts.

State-controlled television accused Mr Ivancic of journalistic behaviour "unimaginable in the West", commenting that "Feral Tribune tries to present libel as objective journalism, and the worst mudslinging and insults of public figures as the height of media freedom".

Iraqi exiles embark on the road to ruin

Julian Borger in Amman

THE exile in the back of the car passed forward a black velvet bag. He said nothing and his nearly blind mother was none the wiser. She was not even aware of the grey worm of ash accumulating at the end of her cigarette.

The driver — an Iraqi woman called Khadija who has been in Amman for a year — shook the bag until a diamond bracelet fell out on to her lap. As soon as she saw it, she switched to talking in English. "I know someone who will be fair with you. How much are you asking?"

The exile gave an embarrassed chuckle, but it was clear he had given a lot of thought to the matter. "Fifteen hundred," he said quietly, also in English. "I feel bad. It is part of her trousseau but there is no choice. We have to get out."

The exile — a thin, balding man in his early 40s — helped his mother out of the car without a word and they walked away, one small step at a time.

"It's a pity. They come from a big family. They used to be rich. But there are lots of Iraqis coming in now who are much worse off," Khadija said.

Every day a handful more Iraqis step out of taxis in Jordan's capital and — with more fatigue than hope — begin their exile. They are fleeing poverty, dictatorship and the threat of war (probably in that order), but most are heading for disillusion, betrayal and even deeper destitution.

Despite the growing threat of air-strikes since Iraq began defying the United Nations weapons inspection teams, there has been no sudden flood of refugees into Amman. Most who could afford the $420 the Iraqi government demands for an exit visa have already fled. Those who remain are the poor, the soldiers and the government workers who are forbidden to leave.

Among the new arrivals near the bus station last week, the absence of hope after six years of sanctions seemed to have been as powerful a motive to leave as the fear of bombs.

Karim, a 40-year-old from Baghdad, said: "People are not afraid. They know the bombs will come, but they know where they will hit. It will all be on a computer." Karim was on his way to the United Arab Emirates, from where he had unspecified "travel plans".

No one knows how many Iraqi exiles are in Jordan. The official figure is 19,000, but Jordanian officials say it is probably well over 100,000.

Father George Issa, an Iraqi Orthodox priest, estimates that there are 30,000 Christians alone. Christians make up only 5 per cent of Iraq's population. Exile has stripped most of his congregation of what few possessions they had.

"Most of them have relatives in the West who have persuaded them to come. When they get here they start to go to embassies. The embassies do not say from the beginning they will not give them a visa. They say: 'Pay the fees and wait for the visa.' So they pay $600 or $800 and after a year the family lose all their money. And then the embassies say: 'Sorry, no visa.'

"It is a disaster. I say to them, why don't you go back to Iraq. They say if we had a house in Iraq, we would go back tomorrow. But we have nothing."

The exile who was selling the bracelet had held a sensitive job in the government and had bribed his way out, knowing he could never return. Both the British and United States embassies in Amman had interrogated him at length. Then, after hours of detailed interviews about Saddam Hussein's regime, they told him he would not be given asylum.

"The man from the British embassy was laughing when he handed me my documents back. He seemed to enjoy it. That's what hurt most of all," the exile said.

He was a wanted man in Baghdad, said Khadija, the taxi driver. His life was at risk every day he spent in Amman, which is teeming with President Saddam's agents. She, and most Iraqi exiles, believe there are spies watching the gates of all the embassies and the United nations High Commissioner for Refugees' office.

There is one possible way out, and both Fr George and the exile mentioned the same price — $5,000. That is what a few Amman travel agents charge for a trip to Romania or Ukraine and then a flight to the West on forged papers.

"Only about 10 per cent get through. The other 90 per cent are captured and sent back," Fr George said. "They [the travel agents] will do anything to make money. It doesn't matter to them that it destroys a whole family."

Latter-day pioneer in a cultural wilderness



Washington diary

Martin Kettle

AMERICANS do not have an inferiority complex about many things, but one of the exceptions is a frequently apologetic attitude on behalf of their nation's television programmes. This is especially true when they meet someone from Britain, since many seem to feel that British television, and in particular the BBC, still represents all that is best in the medium and all that they lack on their own networks.

Such is the strength of this view that the United States' PBS public broadcasting channel relies for much of its scheduling on British programmes. The unspoken assumption seems to be that British means quality. But the British television programmes that PBS routinely carries are not always the jewels in the crown that a proud British viewer might expect. Pride And Prejudice is there, of course, and The South Bank Show too. But they coexist with less ambitious British achievements. If you want to see old episodes of EastEnders or Are You Being Served?, for instance, then turn on PBS and take a trip down memory lane.

If this is the best that Britain can offer, then you might presume that US television programmes must be dire indeed. And some of them are. But not as many of them are as bad as the diffident Americans and the complacent British like to think. And there is, in particular, one truly towering exception, which is the glory of American television and which surpasses much that is produced anywhere else.

These are the documentaries produced over the past couple of decades by the US film-maker Ken Burns. Burns's most famous work was his series of documentaries on the American Civil War. These achieved the remarkable feat of sustaining a compelling documentary narrative based almost entirely on still photographs and on extracts from contemporary letters and journals. After these widely praised efforts, and looking around for a second theme in which to embody his feelings about the US, Burns produced a series of films on baseball. Since then there have been documentaries on a series of emblematic Americans, most recently on Thomas Jefferson.

Burns's films are almost always historical. He tells the story of an event or a life with what feels like a minimum of directorial intervention. Though his films have an utterly distinctive character, they betray little of Burns's own ego. Their characteristic is a lingering camera shot on a timeless still, with a few words spoken simply and unaffectedly in counterpoint, and, in the background, a melancholy piano or a fiddle slowly picking out a cornily familiar tune from yesteryear. The films have an unmistakably nostalgic feel, celebrating a lost America and lost Americans with a restraint and in a long concentration span that are a mighty reprimand to the assumption that today's viewers want only noise and action, and want both as quickly as possible.

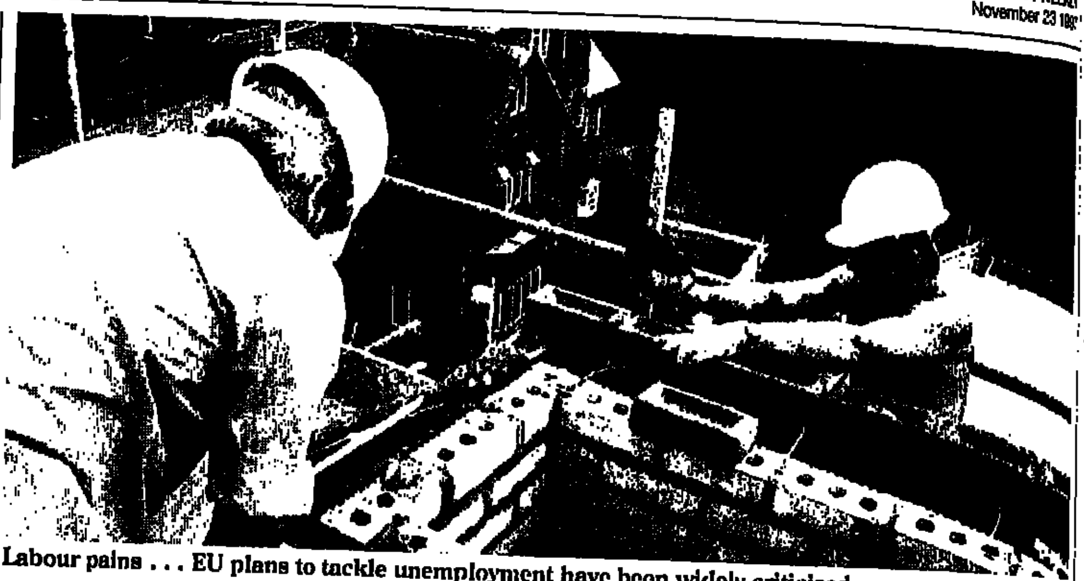
This month, Burns's latest documentaries received their first showing. A pair of films, each nearly two hours long, they tell the story of the Lewis and Clark expedition which, in a trek lasting more than two years from 1804 until 1806, completed the first overland crossing of the US.

Lewis and Clark presented Burns with a new sort of challenge. Since their expedition took place not merely before the invention of moving pictures, but also before the invention of photography in any form, their story must be told with few visual aids. On the other hand, the "Corps of Discovery" that set out up the Missouri river from St Louis in 1804 to find the northwest passage to the Pacific passed through some of the most outstanding and beautiful scenery on the planet.

Burns's latest films are therefore something of a cross between the historical story-telling of his earlier work and an up-market travel documentary. Except that the constraint of historical accuracy means that Burns has had to avoid allowing any trace of the 20th century — or the 19th century either, for that matter — to invade any of his frames. If the landscape isn't plausibly as Lewis and Clark themselves might have experienced it, then Burns doesn't allow it in his film. Interestingly, that means that many of the landmarks on their voyage have had to be omitted. After 193 years, there are few corners, even of the American wildernesses, that have not been marked by Man.

Or, to be more accurate, marked by the white man. For the other great visual omission of Burns's new film are the native Americans, through whose lands Lewis and Clark's route always lay. The history of the expedition can even be told in terms of its dependence upon native Americans; of the Sioux who, suspicious and resentful, held up the Corps of Discovery as it moved up the Missouri; of the Mandan Indians of present-day North Dakota among whom the expedition wintered in 1804; of the Shoshone, who traded them the horses without which they could never have crossed the Rockies the following summer; or of the Perce Nez of modern Oregon who nursed them back from starvation. One Shoshone woman even accompanied the entire 4,000-mile trek (as did one black slave).

Yet Burns's film can show little of these tribes or their lives, if they now exist at all. To give an idea of the land through which Lewis and Clark travelled, Burns has had to use the few sites where Man has not left his imprint. And to give an idea of the peoples who lived on that land, he has had to turn once more to old photographs. Once Lewis and Clark had passed that way, both the landscape and the people were doomed. It is not the least of Ken Burns's achievements that he never shirks the consequences of the epic tales he tells so supremely well.



Labour pains . . . EU plans to tackle unemployment have been widely criticised PHOTO: GRAHAM TURNER

Is Europe's market up to the job?

Europe this week

Martin Walker

EUROPE'S presidents and prime ministers gather in Luxembourg on Friday for what was announced with much fanfare at the Amsterdam treaty negotiations last summer as the jobs summit. Some such special display of political concern was deemed essential, as the ranks of Europe's unemployed swelled to 18 million, of whom more than half were either young people or those out of work for a year or more.

The tiny country of Luxembourg, whose turn it is to chair the European Union council and to host its summits, was nervous about it from the beginning. Its prime minister, Jean-Claude Juncker, has fretted publicly that it might become just another hollow talk-fest, and the European Commission has worked hard to win consensus around a scheme for a series of national "action plans", all to be somehow integrated into a broad European policy.

This has caused some disarray. The Commission's initial proposals for the summit, which spoke grandly of 12 million new jobs and raising the EU's jobs-to-adult-population-ratio from 60 per cent to the United States and Japanese levels of 70 per cent, have been widely criticised as too ambitious, too target-oriented and too much the mixture as before.

Some member states have rejected the idea of setting targets at all, and said that unemployment policies remain a national rather than an EU responsibility. Others have gone along with the EU, in the hope that their voters will take the wish for the deed and acknowledge that at least the politicians are doing something.

The real problem is that there is no single EU unemployment problem. It has several different ones. Britain, thanks to Margaret Thatcher's defeat of the trade unions, has a highly flexible labour market where it is easy to hire and fire and to attract young people into work with very low entry wages. Britain has, according to its own statistics, unemployment of less than 6 per cent, but still more than 7 per cent by the way the EU measures it. France has almost 13 per cent out of work and, like Italy, is hoping to spread a limited amount of work more widely by moving to a 35-hour week. Germany's unemployment, still rising, is more than 11 per cent, but concentrated in the regions of former East Germany. Spain has the worst figure, 21 per cent, but with a lively underground economy.

In this context, it is not obvious what overall European policies would help. But the EU bureaucracy has made a decent stab at some guidelines. Europe spends 200 billion ecus a year ($235 billion) on mainly passive steps such as unemployment benefits, and the EU proposes to shift more and more of that money to active measures such as training. It spends another 100 billion ecus on state aid to industry.

It is proposing ideas such as an all-European qualification for apprentices, more help for language training, and pension portability to allow the unemployed to find work in other countries. It wants countries to learn from one another's "best practice" ideas, such as the way the Dutch are making some long-term unemployed into semi-official and unarmed special constables, or the way Austria has established garages where young offenders can earn a wage while qualifying as motor mechanics.

MORE ambitious, but with less prospect of swift enactment, are ideas to lubricate the single market by making tax policies increasingly common, a move that will probably have to come from those countries that sign up for the single currency. The EU also likes to talk of "reducing the fiscal burden on employment", by which they mean cutting the payroll and social security taxes that turn a $25-an-hour German machinist into a labour cost of almost $40 an hour for his employer. This would require a revolution in both social and fiscal policies, which has made trade unions nervous.

The unions are planning mass demonstrations at the jobs summit to stress the need to battle unemployment, but not at the expense of the European social model. Various outside stars, such as the former "Mr Europe", Jacques Delors, and President Clinton's old labour secretary, Robert Reich, have been invited to offer their wisdom. And since a gathering of this many political chiefs cannot be seen to fail, what seems likely is some vague form of overall commitment to a European solution for jobs that does not involve the slash-and-burn techniques of a Thatcher or a Reagan.

It will not be easy, because there is no "magic bullet" solution. If training and good apprenticeships were the answer, German unemployment would not be high as it is. And the evidence from Sweden suggests that training succeeds best when it is done by a particular employer, investing in particular market needs, rather than the general provision of skills that are rapidly outdated in the current storm of technological change. If spending on education were the answer, and the experience of Ireland and Denmark suggests that it might be, then why should Britain be doing rather well at job creation after years of educational under-investment?

The other problem is that everyone has already agreed that there should be no new money for Keynesian job creation, just a re-ordering of current budgets and priorities. So in a mood of growing alarm that the jobs summit was turning into a damp and controversial squib, the Commission last week took the unprecedented step of authorising value added tax (VAT) cuts in labour-intensive service industries as a way to create new jobs. The goals of the EU jobs summit were being "misinterpreted and misunderstood . . . under-appreciated and oversold", the Commission's president, Jacques Santer, admitted.

"We cannot allow this summit to be a failure," Santer said, after the Commission approved a series of redrafted guidelines and new measures, including the VAT cut experiment, as EU unemployment continued to remain stubbornly high, despite the variable economic recovery in the big economies of Britain, Germany, France and Italy.

"I want to make it clear that we are not expecting so many million new jobs from this summit. We want it to define a method that will commit us all to an integrated process, led by member state governments but learning from each other," Santer said.

The VAT reform is modest enough, after bitter rows inside the Commission bureaucracy over any surrender of one of the EU's few guaranteed revenues. It offers an optional experiment in a series of yet-to-be-approved localities for no more than three years to see if VAT cuts can create jobs in the service sector. Predictably, it was mocked in some sections of the British press as "the massage parlour's charter".

Enigmatic communist

Georges Marchais

A RIDDLE wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma: Churchill's view of Soviet policy in 1939 can be applied to the position of Georges Marchais in the French Communist party. The riddle is how Marchais, who has died aged 77, managed to stay in power for so long; 23 years as secretary-general and 41 years as an active member of the general committee, resigning because of ill health in 1994. The mystery is how, in that period, the Communist party suffered diminished fortunes when the persisting economic conditions should have assisted its activities. The enigma is whether the whole history of French communism is to be told in terms of decline and failure.

The first problem with regard to Marchais is to explain his sudden rise. In 1951, having been a party member for four years, he became an official in the Union of Metalworkers for the Seine department. This was a minor post in which he was not very successful. Yet, in 1956, he became a temporary member of the central committee. This was rapidly made permanent and, in 1959, he joined the politburo.

There are several explanations for this remarkable series of promotions. The simplest is that he was the sort of recruit the party liked to have. Born in a small Normandy village, he was the son of a quarry worker who died when Marchais was 10. Marchais left home when he was 15 and went to Paris, where he worked as an office boy before he found work in an aircraft factory. He was therefore a genuine worker with a background of poverty.

Marchais showed himself to be hard-working and devoted. He was also ambitious, but above all he was loyal and dependable, and earned the approval of Maurice Thorez, party leader since 1930.

A more sinister explanation for Marchais's spectacular rise is to be found in the suggestion, made by hostile commentators, that the French party, like Stalin, favoured the promotion of those who had something to hide, thus reinforcing the control the apparatus could exercise over them. This is the subject of the second major problem.

Marchais, aged only 19, had not done his military service when war broke out. He remained in his factory at Biévres when it was taken over by the Germans and reorganised for the benefit of the Nazi war effort. In December 1942, he was asked to work in Bavaria, and having passed the medical examination and received the money bonus the Germans offered, he took the train to Leipheim where he worked, producing Messerschmidts, either until May 1943 or until the end of the war.

In June 1970, some five months after Marchais had been appointed joint secretary-general of the party, some former members accused him of having volunteered to work for the Germans. These accusations were to dog Marchais's life. When he brought legal actions against his accusers, in 1978 and 1979, he lost.

However, this story had not emerged when, in 1969, the politburo of the party decided without discussion that Marchais should act as secretary-general, jointly with Thorez's successor, Waldeck Rochet, who was ill. When the time came for him to enter the national assembly for the Val-de-Marne *département*, it was the heroic Marie Claude Vaillant Couturier who made way for him.

The party was confronted by major problems. The return to power of De Gaulle in 1958 and the reinforcement of Gaullism; the so-called revolution of 1968 and the growth of a fashionable leftism that was hostile to the communists; and the intervention of Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia.

The logical step was to suggest that the communists make some sort of alliance with the socialists (now led by François Mitterrand). This Marchais did in June 1972, some months before he was officially enthroned as sole secretary-general by the party congress.

But the alliance was a disaster. The communists watched helplessly as the socialists made themselves the leading party of the left. The climax came in 1981 when Mitterrand was elected president, Marchais receiving a meagre 15.3 per cent of the vote in the first ballot.

However, the French Communist party still exists and retains its importance. For many years commentators have been prophesying its disappearance. And if it has not vanished, it is thanks to Marchais.

Douglas Johnson

Georges Marchais, politician, born June 7, 1920; died November 16, 1997



Marchais with Mitterrand at a demonstration in Paris in 1973

Kenya approaches an election with a crumbling social fabric and a political class that is deeply corrupt. **Matthew Engel** reports



Nairobi slums . . . the people are not starving, but they are hungry PHOTOGRAPH: R DREXEL

Troubled heart of Africa

IT IS HALF way through the equatorial afternoon. In the wood-panelled parliamentary chamber, a grey-haired African in a dark suit gets to his feet on the opposition front bench. "Bwana Speaker," he begins.

This is how the most optimistic British imagined it would be when they began their withdrawal from Africa almost four decades ago: Westminster democracy exported in kit form and rebuilt in the tropics. And here in the Kenyan National Assembly are all the trappings of home: points of order, the mace, the despatch box, "the ayes have it".

Unfortunately for Kenya, the ayes always have it. Since independence in 1963, it has been governed by just two men: the founding father, Jomo Kenyatta, and, since 1978, his successor, Daniel arap Moi. President Moi is widely regarded as a corrupt and vicious egomaniac who has tortured dissidents and bled dry what was once Africa's most promising nation.

Last month Joshua Kulei, the presidential adviser, was accused of having grafted a fortune of $150 million in a country where the per capita income is about $240 a year. The most staggering thing about this well-presented allegation is that it appeared in a Nairobi magazine, Finance. In parliament, opposition members are not afraid to make similar comments. The grey-haired African is Martin Shikuku, known as "the people's watchman": "Thou shalt harvest what thou hast sown," he is saying, looking at ministers opposite. "He that harvests what he has not sown is a thief. They harvest everything."

The follow-up edition of Finance, which widened its attack to pin corruption allegations on President Moi's powerful son, Gideon, failed to make it to the Nairobi newsstands. Welcome to Kenya.

The controversy over Nigeria enabled the Moi regime to pass unnoticed among the crowd at the recent Commonwealth summit. And in any case, Kenya exhibits few of the outward signs of traditional dictatorship. At the moment it is enjoying a remarkable outbreak of vibrant debate. The British can never have allowed anything like this: and for most of the 34 years of independence Kenyatta and Moi never did either. Parliament was a sham until the early 1990s, when Western pressure forced Moi to allow parties other than his own ruling group, Kanu.

But this is more ferment than free speech. What is allowed in sophisticated Nairobi does not happen upcountry. The Kulei allegations first appeared in a small-town paper, the Rift Valley Times: the publisher and writer were locked up. Troublesome young men who criticise tribal elders and district commissioners are not patted on the head indulgently, either.

The dissent has not happened because the president wanted it. A country dependent on tourism and aid has had to adjust, at least outwardly, to the will of its paymasters. And it may not last. Moi faces re-election before the end of this year. The electoral commission has set December 29 as the date for general elections, ending months of political uncertainty. He may win again, even though he is much hated, because the election will be unfair and the opposition is both split and hopeless. Anything is possible, including bloody civil war. It is hard to imagine that Kenya can continue on its present path.

Many African leaders have long complained, with some justification, that the Western media give a false impression by only reporting the horsemen of the African apocalypse: coups, wars, famines and epidemics, preferably involving at least 10,000 dead. It is customary to quote Pliny: *Ex Africa semper aliquid novi* — always something new out of Africa. In fact, There is never anything new out of Africa. What we hear is always the same.

The leaders would like us to report only their successes — which would be even more misleading. But somewhere in between is the day-to-day reality of Africa. And it is a reality that bears more relation to Dickensian London than to our own life in the 1990s: prone to gnawing hunger more often than utter starvation; ordinary, preventable diseases more than epidemics.

The reality reaches its apogee in the urban slums: brutal, elemental, joyful, fearful. Dickens novels traditionally end with the hero discovering a rich benefactor to take him away from the poverty. Africa has a rich, if not generous benefactor: the West. Unfortunately, the money rarely arrives.

Half-knowing this, half-fearing the complications, the West has turned away from most of Africa. It has preferred the simplicity of South Africa, where goodies and baddies have been clearly defined. That huge chunk of the world between Libya and the Limpopo has become too complicated.

Even the maps deny understanding. Mercator's Projection, which flattens the tropical regions, makes Africa appear the size of Greenland: it is 13 times as big. The UK can fit into Sudan alone 10 times.

I first went to Africa around 20 years ago. I was entranced by Kenya, but never dared try to get into Uganda, at that time under the thrall of Idi Amin. Now Kenya is perceived to be on the way down, and Uganda on the way up. This time I was able to visit them both. Kenya remains utterly beguiling, full of natural glory and sparky people. But its social fabric is crumbling, as certainly as the roads.

For much of the 1990s, Kenya had the world's highest population growth. Arguably, this was the result of its particular level of development. The health system had improved enough for babies to live, and sick adults to recover, but society had not reached the level of sophistication that leads to smaller families.

Kenya seems to be solving its population crisis. The hospitals no longer have medicines: they get stolen, to be sold privately. Cholera is rampant over much of the country. In some places nearly a third of the population is thought to be HIV-positive. The papers are full of death notices for youngish men and women.

If you turn off the main road past the lovely, shaded Ngong racecourse, you find Kebira. It is a slum, housing 150,000 people, maybe more; no one seems to know. People just come and put up one-room mud huts. They are now so packed in, there is no room even for more latrines. Some men do casual work; more look for it, though every hut seems to operate as a sort-of business, mostly a one-woman business — the Rub-a-Dub Bar, Mashimuni's Music, the Jambo Butchery, with one slab of meat in the window. This is Africa at its most Dickensian.

Goats wander the muddy streets, living on discarded banana leaves and corn husks. "They are very healthy," says Rev Joseph Oduor, chairman of the well-regarded Kebira Community Self-help Project.

The humans do less well. At the project's shabby HQ, with no electricity, never mind sanitation, a lone social worker is teaching a safe motherhood course. She is on to the relevance of water hygiene and its importance in preventing disease. On the day I visited, there was a breakdown, and only one tap was working to service the town.

People in Kebira are not starving, so they never make the news. They are just hungry. From the highest point, it is possible to see the presidential mansion, less than a mile away. "He came to visit us once," Oduor says. "He walked around for a little while. He didn't stay long." Clare Short, the UK's International Development Secretary, came more recently on her ministerial visit to Kenya. "Don't these people have votes?" she asked.

They do, but democracy here is mysterious. The peculiar requirements of the Kenyan system are widely thought to have been responsible for the recent outbreak of ethnic cleansing around Mombasa, when traditionally anti-Moi voters from upcountry were attacked and killed or driven out. The main aim was not the killing, but the removal of opposition votes from what, in the Kenyan context, is a marginal seat. Local Kanu leaders — scared for their own graft-gathering positions more than the president's — are presumed responsible, with connivance from on high.

The high-profile attacks on demonstrators in Nairobi have now, belatedly, been repudiated by Moi. These incidents were more a reflection of the security forces' crassness and jumpiness than of the regime's intentions. The evil of Kenyan politics is meant to lurk in the crevices, not frighten the tourists.

Worse violence will almost certainly come. But it will probably happen away from the camera crews. Vote-rigging is a certainty as well, but many believe it will not be on a scale to affect the overall result. "Of course the election will be corrupt," says Jaindi Kisero, editor of the Weekly Review in Nairobi. "These fellows have been there for years. They don't know how to have a fair election. Everything will go on. The results won't be accurate, but I think they will still be a fair assessment."

The Weekly Review is not regarded as particularly anti-Moi. But Kisero is convinced Moi has had it. "It will go to a run-off, and whoever finishes second will beat him. The man is very unpopular. The country needs to modernise. Everyone knows that. The only sector which hasn't caught up is the political one, and it has to change."

The corruption of power in Kenya does not involve tinpot politicians filching the contents of the odd hotel mini-bar. It involves tinpot politicians filching the country. "There is so much that could happen here if you just got rid of not even a hundred thieves, but just 20 of them," says one local businessman.

The corruption is on a mind-boggling scale. Everyone's favourite case is the Goldenberg scandal. This resulted from a scheme whereby exporters were encouraged by substantial incentive payments from the government. An Asian businessman got millions of dollars as reward for exporting gold and diamonds. Kenya, of course, has no gold or diamonds.

PUBLIC TOILETS and car parks in Nairobi have been quietly sold off to well-placed figures for development. In the suburbs, a big new supermarket has been unable to open because, at the last moment, the crony of a minister popped up and announced that he had just been given title to the verge between the supermarket land and the road, and wanted $800,000 before he would allow access. Meanwhile the roads get worse with every rain storm.

The corruption is built into daily life. Kenya depends on the *harambee* system. This was supposed to be an admirable method of self-help, widely used to improve, for instance, education. It works in almost the same way as the primary school sponsored walk or the PTA jumble sale. Except for two things: (a) since the central funds have almost certainly gone missing, the school will be wholly rather than partially dependent on harambees; (b) politicians traditionally donate to all the harambees in their constituency.

To maintain face, they have to give large sums to each one. Since they are only paid $150 a month, most of the money must be stolen. Kenyans seem unable to make the connection. MPs who have tried to be honest, and make small donations, have had the money flung back at them as an insult.

In Kenya, the leaders have overdone it. There has to be a reckoning. And if it does not come at the ballot box, then it may well come in a manner that is too terrible to contemplate.

Daniel arap Moi, president of Kenya since 1978, and widely regarded as a corrupt egomaniac

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Radio poll scrapped after charges of vote-rigging

THE BBC dumped its popular Personality of the Year radio poll after admitting that it was impossible to prevent the vote from being rigged by political parties and other pressure groups.

The annual competition run by the Today programme on Radio 4 provided an enjoyable year-end diversion for millions of listeners. In previous years, winners have included Mikhail Gorbachev, Margaret Thatcher, and Pope John Paul II.

Last year, however, the poll descended into chaos and voting had to be suspended when the corporation discovered that Labour and Conservative supporters were trying artificially to inflate support for their respective leaders, Tony Blair and John Major.

When the result became known on Boxing Day, Mr Major was declared the winner, but 4,000 votes cast for him were later disqualified after evidence of multiple voting. It emerged that Labour, too, had used its audience participation unit to try to inflate support for Mr Blair.

Rigging was first suspected as long ago as 1991, when the improbable winner appeared to be Lal Krishnan Advani, leader of India's Bharatiya Janata Party. But the poll was abandoned when many of his votes were found to have come from the same postal areas in Birmingham and Bradford and to have been identically worded.

ALTHOUGH the Government is reluctant to pass a privacy law, an opinion poll suggested that 87 per cent of respondents would support a law to protect the private lives of public figures against media intrusion. Nearly six out of 10 thought that the current system of self-regulation operated by the Press Complaints Commission was not working.

Those polled were, however, somewhat selective about who they wished to see protected by a new law. Doubtless inspired by the attack on "evil" tabloids by Earl Spencer, brother of Diana, Princess of Wales, more than 80 per cent thought that the private lives of the royal family should be shielded by the courts. A small majority (55 per cent) favoured protecting the private lives of pop stars and celebrities, but there was little support for protecting politicians from media probing.

The findings will fuel debate over the new powers being given to High Court judges to create a new "case-by-case" privacy law. These powers are contained in the measure now going through Parliament to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into British law. This requires judges to strike a balance, in cases of alleged media intrusion, between a new right to respect for private and family life and a right to freedom of expression, including the freedom of the press.

PENSION FUNDS for millions of local authority workers are being put at risk because thousands of white-collar staff — mainly senior grades — have been taking advantage of overly generous early retirement packages according to the Audit Commission, which has called for far stricter rules for calculating and awarding such payments.

More than 32,000 staff retired early during 1995-6 — three in four of all who retired. Of those, two in five did so on grounds of ill-health — a far higher proportion than in other private and public sector organisations. This has run up a £5.7 billion bill on future pension commitments.

A local government official who retires early suffers no reduction in pension and may even receive a top-up payment. The commission claimed that the discretion to offer early retirement packages was being abused, and that "early retirement has drifted from being the exception to becoming expected".

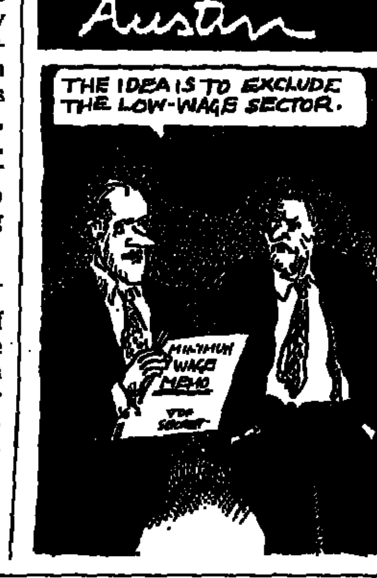
THIS YEAR'S large new intake of (mostly Labour) MPs are not impressed by the customs and traditions they have encountered in the House of Commons and are calling for modernisation to "rehabilitate Parliament in the eyes of the public".

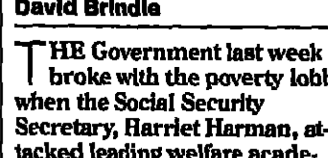
Phyllis Starkey, a former research scientist, was moved to object after seeing Tory MPs indulging in "yelling, gesturing and frankly boorish behaviour" when Douglas Alexander, Labour's by-election winner at Paisley South, tried to take the oath of allegiance. She and another Labour newcomer, Tony Wright, also complained about the way debates were hogged by senior members.

Labour, with such a large majority, requires only that new members should perform dutifully in the voting lobbies, where they complain of congestion. A modernisation committee which is examining procedures is still looking into the "feasibility and desirability" of electronic voting.

THE SPICE GIRLS, hailed as the greatest exponents of British Girl Power since Boudicca, were booed off stage in Barcelona after a week that showed the fault lines spreading beneath their platform-booted feet. They left amid catcalls after trying to insist that photographers be removed from the auditorium at an awards ceremony.

The girls had earlier dumped their manager, Simon Fuller, who would normally have been there with his fixers to smooth things over. Bookmakers made them only second favourites for the Christmas No 1 — behind children's TV characters the Teletubbies.





This cartoon by the Guardian's Steve Bell helped him scoop the award for political cartoonist of the year at the Cartoon Art Trust awards in London last week. He also won the strip cartoonist of the year award

Mandelson in low-pay row

Seumas Milne

ONE of the Government's flagship policies, the national minimum wage, looked at risk of being holed by Peter Mandelson, the Minister without Portfolio, who has called for sweeping exemption powers, according to cabinet papers passed to the Guardian.

In a letter to Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, Mr Mandelson argued that the Government should be able to exempt employers from a minimum wage on the basis of region, sector or size of firm. In response Ms Beckett — whose department is currently drawing up the bill to introduce a minimum wage — wrote to the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, saying Mr Mandelson's proposals would be "well-nigh unworkable" and "inconsistent with the idea of a national minimum wage".

As the Government came under fire from unions, its own backbenchers, the Tories and Lib Dems, Downing Street attempted to distance the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, from Mr Mandelson's proposals. A key minister insisted that "a national minimum wage will be available to all workers from day one, whether they are full-time, part-time, temporary, casual or homeworkers".

Mr Mandelson said his proposals were being misinterpreted. In a letter to the Guardian, he said there was no question of him seeking to "derail" the Government's policy. What he was concerned to ensure, he said, is that ministers are allowed "sufficient flexibility to refine policy in the light of experience with the actual functioning of the national minimum wage".

Union leaders reacted angrily to Mr Mandelson's proposals, insisting that allowing exemptions would torpedo a central Labour policy. John Edmonds, leader of the GMB general union and TUC president, said that if the Government accepted Mr Mandelson's proposals, it would "end up with no national minimum wage, no effective campaign against poverty in work and an unfair and unenforceable mess".

The disclosure that the Government is considering creating an escape clause if its minimum wage policy goes sour follows a row at the Labour party conference last month, when Mr Mandelson appeared to pre-empt the recommendations of the Low Pay Commission by predicting there would be a lower minimum wage rate for young people.

The commission is planning to recommend a minimum wage figure by next May. The TUC is arguing for a rate of £4-plus, while the Confederation of British Industry wants nothing more than £3.20.

Ms Beckett's letter to Mr Brown reels off a list of ministers pushing for special groups to be excused the legal minimum.

These include the Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, who wants "volunteers" exempted; the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, who wants the option of "selective exemption" in shipping; and the Agriculture Minister, Jack Cunningham, who wants "benefits in kind" counted towards the legal minimum for farm workers.

Ms Beckett warns that this could "open up the scope for businesses in other sectors to claim recognition of special benefits" and would lead to "confusion and inconsistency".

Comment, page 14

Harman snubs poverty lobby

David Brindle

THE Government last week broke with the poverty lobby when the Social Security Secretary, Harriet Harman, attacked leading welfare academics who are pressing for higher benefit levels.

Speaking more bluntly than any Tory minister would have dared, she told welfare experts that people who could work had a duty to do so. There was "a much wiser approach" than raising benefits.

"We want to make the mainstream economy — with its opportunities and risks — the main path out of social exclusion for all people of working age," Ms Harman said.

Her remarks will be seen as a definitive departure for Labour. Although Frank Field, the minister for welfare reform, had taken issue with the academic critics, Ms Harman's snub carried the imprimatur of the Cabinet.

She will also be seen to have sent a clear signal to Labour backbenchers threatening revolt over the Government's determination to press on with cuts in lone parents' benefits, initiated by the Tories.

The academics' protest over benefit levels came last month in an open letter signed by 54 professors of social policy. It said failure to consider increases would leave the Government "with one hand tied behind its back" in its professed desire to tackle social exclusion.

Ministers appeared to have "erased from the map" the issue of income redistribution, the professors said.

Mr Field called it "naive and cynical" to believe that simply increasing benefits helps the poor. Ms Harman argued that raising them would show "we have failed to learn from the past".

In an address launching a centre for analysis of social exclusion, at the London School of Economics, Ms Harman said: "Where funds were available, they should help find training and jobs for people trapped outside the labour market. Although this would mean hard choices — which would not be ducked — the aim was to reform the welfare state around the work ethic."

● A coalition of more than 140 charities and welfare groups, led by Oxfam, told the United Nations committee on economic, social and cultural rights that Britain is failing its international obligations on issues ranging from housing to sex equality amid growing concern at the direction of Labour thinking and policy-making on poverty matters.

Blair apologises for F1 débâcle

Michael White

TONY BLAIR on Sunday made a dramatic apology to voters for the Government's handling of the Formula One sponsorship controversy, winning the applause of Labour loyalists but failing to stem the flow of Opposition questions about Downing Street's response to Bernie Ecclestone's £1 million gift to the Labour party before the election.

With Labour struggling to turn public attention to the wider questions of political funding by challenging the Conservative leader, William Hague, to name every Tory donor above £5,000 since 1992, it also emerged that Mr Blair's television appearance, in a desperate move to stem the row, was virtually dictated by frustrated cabinet colleagues.

Several senior ministers, including Jack Straw, Gordon Brown and David Blunkett, who had rallied publicly to Downing Street's defence at the start of last week only to find that Blair aides had "only given them half a story", were reluctant to do so again. It appears they were not told that when Mr Blair wrote to the standards watchdog, Sir Patrick Neill, asking if he felt there would appear to be a conflict of interest in keeping Mr Ecclestone's donation, the letter also requested advice on whether Labour should accept a further gift from the F1 boss.

Mr Blair was persuaded last Friday that only he could stop the rot by making a clean breast of errors in what had been Labour's worst week since the general election.

His television appeal to the electorate to accept that he was still the "pretty straight sort of guy" who had earned their trust on May 1 was part of what proved to be a qualified apology — for the way the affair has been managed rather than for the policy decisions on tobacco sponsorship of F1 racing, which triggered the crisis.

"I didn't get it all wrong in relation to the original decision as I'd be very happy to explain. But it hasn't been handled well and for that I take full responsibility. And I apologise for that. I suppose what I would say to you is that perhaps I didn't focus on this and the seriousness of it in the way that I should, as I was focusing on other issues," the Prime Minister told BBC1's On The Record.

In a significant concession, Mr Blair promised to — and promptly did — publish the informal Civil Service note taken of his October 16 meeting with Mr Ecclestone to prove that nothing improper occurred. He said he realised that there appeared to be a conflict of interest when, two weeks after meeting Mr Ecclestone, he made the decision to exempt grand prix racing from a tobacco advertising ban.

Mr Blair also undertook to publish names of all £5,000-plus donors to the Labour party since 1992 if other parties would do the same.



Blair: 'pretty straight sort of guy'

The secretive Tories demurred, pending further discussion within Mr Hague's shadow team. But John Redwood, who attacked Mr Blair's performance as "a story riddled with holes", pointed out that the gifts had been made to the Conservatives on the understanding that they would remain confidential.

● The Government angrily denied a link between the approval of an edge-of-town supermarket in a wealthy London suburb and a substantial donation to Labour funds by Lord Sainsbury. Mr Blair said the supermarket boss had been "absolutely pilloried" because he was a supporter of the party. The Sainsbury's development had initially been turned down by the local council.

Grand prix's boss, page 38

IRA rebels to oppose talks

John Mullin in Belfast

IRA dissidents who say there have been mass defections in its heartland of south Armagh, plan to form a group to oppose Sinn Fein's peace strategy, it was claimed on Sunday.

The group could start next week, and be fronted by the sister of a hunger striker, said a spokesman for the dissidents. The woman quit the 12-member IRA army executive last month along with her boyfriend, the IRA quartermaster-general.

The organisation would rally those unhappy with the IRA leadership's backing of the peace process. The dissidents believe it can only lead to a settlement which maintained the partition of Ireland.

The development could herald the biggest split in the republican movement since the Provisionals quit the Official IRA. There was no indication of whether or not the dissidents planned an immediate return to violence.

But they are unlikely to join forces with Continuity IRA, the maverick group which rejects the ceasefire, and which was behind several recent attacks, including the van bomb which devastated Markethill, Co Armagh, two months ago.

The claims came in a telephone call from a payphone in the Republic of Ireland to an Irish radio programme in New York. The presenter is convinced the call was genuine.

Up to 20 IRA members quit after a crisis meeting on strategy in Donegal last month. Another 12 Sinn Fein members then quit in Co Louth, where the quartermaster-general and his girlfriend live.

Sinn Fein has denied mass defections. But the caller insisted again that there had been 35 resignations in South Armagh. He said the IRA's engineering department, which develops bomb-making technology, had also quit.

Amid growing fears for the future of the ceasefire, Tony Blair is expected to invite Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein president, to Downing Street before Christmas.

Mr Adams would be the first Irish republican leader since the foundation of Northern Ireland 76 years ago to be welcomed in Downing Street, where the IRA mounted a mortar bomb attack seven years ago. A meeting would carry symbolic significance, but in itself is unlikely to appease dissent within the IRA.

Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein's chief negotiator, speaking last weekend in Boston, Massachusetts, warned of unrest because the talks were making little progress. "Christmas is coming and it would not be lost on people if some accused IRA members in British jails were released."

● Irish army bomb disposal experts on Monday detonated a suspect device which the breakaway Loyalist Volunteer Force claimed it had planted in a shopping centre in Dundalk, Co Louth. The LVF is opposed to the ceasefire.

Safety body 'fails workers'

Seumas Milne and David Bergman

THERE has been a sharp drop in the rate of investigations into major workplace injuries by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the Government's industrial safety watchdog.

The HSE's own records reveal that the proportion of such investigations — used to decide whether a prosecution should take place — has fallen from more than 15 per cent of the total in 1994-5 to just over 4 per cent in 1996-7.

Just 2,158 out of 50,000 major injuries were investigated over the past year, and so far only eight prosecutions have been launched into last year's 287 fatal accidents. In 1994-5, there were 3,713 major injury investigations.

Bill Morris, general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, said that the figures showed that "the HSE is simply failing to get to grips with the rising tide of reckless disregard by employers for workers' safety".

The disclosure comes as the Government is preparing legislation to allow company directors whose criminal negligence causes deaths at work to face charges of a new offence of "corporate killing".

Last week the HSE released its revised workplace accident figures for 1996-7, showing an 11 per cent increase in the number of deaths on the previous year.

Jenny Bacon, the HSE director general, said investigations were now more targeted and took longer. But falling resources and staffing had taken their toll and there would be "significant problems" if the present Government stuck to spending plans.

Straw fights free speech ruling

Clare Dyer

THE Home Secretary, Jack Straw, went to the Court of Appeal on Monday to try to overturn a landmark ruling for free speech upholding prisoners' rights to give interviews to the media.

The move coincides with the start of the committee stage of the Human Rights Bill, which will enshrine the right of free speech in English statute law for the first time.

Ian Simms and Michael O'Brien, both serving life sentences for murder, won the ruling in the High Court last December. Prison staff had refused to allow journalists to interview the two, who say they are innocent, unless they gave an undertaking not to publish.

Mr Justice Latham held that the ban was not "justified as the minimum interference necessary with the right of free speech".

He said: "The right to free speech includes a right of access to the media." He gave Michael Howard, then Home Secretary, leave to appeal.

Free speech campaigners had expected Mr Straw to drop the appeal.

John Wadham, director of the rights group, Liberty, said: "If this case was taken in 18 months' time, after the Human Rights Bill becomes law, the Government would have a considerably smaller chance of winning."



In Brief

FRANK GILFORD, the brother of an Australian nurse murdered in Saudi Arabia, has handed over the waiver document that ensures the death penalty will not be carried out on Deborah Parry, one of the two British nurses accused of killing her.

THE Attorney General gave the go-ahead for the prosecution of Richard Tomlinson, a former MI6 agent charged with passing information to an Australian publisher. Mr Tomlinson will be the first person to be prosecuted under the 1989 Official Secrets Act.

A METROPOLITAN police officer, Paul Evans, was convicted of kicking and beating a student, first in the street and later at Stoke Newington police station, on the eve of a festival for the homeless in north London. Six other officers were cleared.

RONNIE BIGGS, the Great Train Robber who has been a fugitive since escaping from Wandsworth prison in 1965, will be allowed to stay in Rio de Janeiro after the Brazilian government refused a British extradition order. Brazil's statute of limitation discounts crimes committed more than 20 years ago.

THE street price of heroin has halved in the past 10 years, and its quality increased, according to doctors. The number of heroin users has doubled in three years.

ALVIN BLACK, the leader of a gang of armed robbers who shot dead Johana Czardebon, a member of a German civic party visiting Bedford, and led violent robberies which terrorised the town, was sentenced to life imprisonment.

THE European Commission is to step up legal action against Britain over its failure to prevent illegal exports of beef following the ban imposed as a result of the crisis over mad cow disease, officials in Brussels said.

SARAH BIGGS, the 15-year-old expelled from her Nottinghamshire school for criticising its teaching standards in a letter to a local newspaper, was vindicated when the local education authority published findings echoing her complaints.

LISA POTTS, the nursery nurse who shielded children with her body when they were attacked by a man with a machete during a school picnic at Wolverhampton, was awarded the George Medal — the second highest civilian award for bravery.

LORD McGREGOR of Durris, passionate believer in press freedom, vigilant opponent of the powerful, the rich and — particularly — politicians, and the first chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, has died aged 76.


Montserrat evacuees Jacintha Allen, her three-year-old twins and mother Catherine PHOTO: GED MURRAY

Montserratians welcomed on Moss Side

Barry Hugill and Michael Prestage

JACINTHA ALLEN has only one complaint — Moss Side is cold. She and her family, three-year-old twins Glenyse and Glenysie and their grandmother Catherine, arrived in Manchester from Montserrat last month.

They fled after a boulder from the erupting volcano came through the roof of Catherine's house. A friend had settled in Manchester, which is why Jacintha is now in Moss Side. The area is dubbed "gangstas' paradise" by the tabloids, and as unlovely as you can get, but, apart from the cold, she loves it.

They have applied for a cold-weather clothing allowance, but the benefits office has refused, as it has other evacuees' applications. They have been told to get jobs, which they are trying to do, but it is easier said than done.

Down the street, Estelle Furlonge and her two-year-old daughter Kadija sit in front of a gas fire. She, too, thinks Moss Side is wonderful. If there are guns and drugs she has not come across them, and she almost cries when she describes how local people have welcomed her and the other evacuees. She used to be a sales clerk and would like to be a secretary but faces the problem of all single mothers — finding a job that pays both the rent and child-care costs.

Last week she spoke to her parents, still on the island. There has been another eruption and more deaths are feared. She hopes they will get the money together to join her and Kadija.

The Moss Side evacuees, clothing allowance apart, praise Britain and the British. They were upset when the International Development Secretary, Clare Short, implied that they were greedy to seek compensation. Montserrat is, after all, a British colony. They are worried that people will believe the island is now safe — they insist it is not.

They do not want to be dubbed scroungers. Estelle used up her life savings getting to Manchester. "We knew so many people who had died. The night before we left, the house next door caught fire and pebbles and stones were hailing down on our roof. We arrived at Gatwick and I didn't know anybody. I was so depressed."

Her salvation was Mosscare, a housing association which has provided homes for 11 Montserrat families. Five more were due this week. Pam Schwartz, Mosscare's chief executive, picked it up on the grapevine that evacuees were making for Manchester. "Here we are in the most notorious inner-city area in the country and there they were not knowing what they were coming to. Well, we set out to make life as easy as possible for them and now we are in regular contact with Montserrat. We even send people to the airport to meet them."

They are housed, their children placed in schools or nurseries and doctors found for them.

The twins, and their mum, are missing the beach. They have heard of Blackpool and ask what it is like. Looking at their bare feet and T-shirts, it's difficult to know what to say. So we tell them about the Golden Mile and the illuminations, which the twins will love. — *The Observer*

Key cancer mechanism identified

Chris Mihill

CANCER scientists last week announced a discovery about the mechanisms controlling cancer cells that could lead to a range of powerful drugs and treatments for the illness.

Researchers from the Imperial Cancer Research Fund (ICRF) have found a fundamental mechanism which controls how cells kill themselves when they are diseased or malfunctioning. It is the failure of this "suicide" mechanism that leads to cancer, by allowing cells to reproduce in an uncontrolled fashion rather than killing themselves.

The mechanism of programmed cell death — apoptosis — has been thought to take place deep within the cell, but the ICRF team has discovered that the "levers and switches and buttons" which control the process are located outside cells.

It will thus make it much easier to target drugs or other forms of treatment to manipulate the levers on the outside of the cell, rather than trying to get such therapies inside.

Professor Gerhard Evan, who led the research, said the finding was one of the most amazing and exciting he had encountered. It opened up a new set of targets for controlling cancer, and could be used to fight other illnesses.

"The results of our research have been totally unexpected — there was no reason to believe that the 'abort' programme that destroys tumour cells should operate via the cell surface," he said.

Prof Evan said drugs could be developed which would repair the broken suicide mechanism, allowing it to kill the cancer, but in other diseases the opposite effect could be created, where the suicide mechanism could be weakened or turned off to stop cells dying. This could help in immune diseases such as HIV, or in neurodegenerative illnesses such as Alzheimer's.

Diplomat claims immunity after abducting daughters

Sarah Boseley

AN AMERICAN diplomat, backed by his government, claimed last week that his diplomatic immunity allowed him to flout the Hague Convention and abduct his two daughters to the United States against the will of his wife and in defiance of an order from the British courts.

The willingness of the US government to defend the actions of the diplomat, whose London posting ended in August, has surprised lawyers involved in child abduction cases. The US is a signatory to the Hague Convention, which forbids any parent in a custody battle from absconding abroad with the children.

It is the first time that the relative strengths of the Vienna Convention, which enshrines diplomatic immunity, and the Hague Convention have been pitted against each other.

The children are girls aged 10 and 13. Their mother is a German national, who met and married the American when he was working in the US embassy in Germany in October 1982. They were posted to London in 1994.

The marriage broke down and in July, the mother began divorce proceedings in Berlin, where she wanted to live. At the same time, she applied to the British court seeking orders that the children should live with her.

She also obtained an order restraining the diplomat, who was then about to return to the US, from removing the girls from her care.

The diplomat, backed by the US embassy, stood on his diplomatic immunity, said the courts had no authority over him, and flew out with the girls on August 8. The mother followed them and the girls are living with her, but the father has applied for custody of them. The diplomat is trying to overturn an order that he must bring the girls back to the UK.

After the High Court had adjourned his request last week that the order be thrown out, he applied to the Court of Appeal.

The appeal judges expressed surprise that a signatory to the Hague Convention should claim immunity from it, and ordered a full hearing.

Desperate days for Dan

DESPERATE DAN, who for 60 years patrolled the mean streets of Cactusville, feasted on a diet of cow pie and owl-hoot juice, and created a vogue for designer stubble, is to hang up his saddlebags and head for the hills, *writes Alex Bellos.*

The Dandy comic last week announced it was pensioning off the most enduring character in British comics — who has been on its front page since its second issue in 1937 — to make way for someone with a greater appeal to 1990s children.

In many ways it is surprising Dan lasted so long. Wild West comic strips have been losing popularity for decades and he is also one of the last remaining adult characters. He has become a legacy from a bygone era — when the Dandy was the market leader, selling more than 2 million copies a week — and even though he traded his horse for a motorbike he never quite entered the modern world. "No matter what you do he will always be a cowboy," said Mr Donaldson.

Dan joins a list of comic characters ditched to take account of changing interests and the new moral climate. Seven years ago, Lord Snooty was killed off from the Beano because the publishers thought that, as the class system was less visible, the strip had lost its relevance. And the Dandy's Merry Marvo and His Magic Cigar was stopped because it was pro-smoking.

Many themes have had to be modified in all cartoons. Political correctness has meant that violence has been toned down, and both the Beano and the Dandy have lost some of their anarchy.

Dan: no more cow pie

Oxbridge accused of corruption on subsidies

John Carvel

A POWERFUL lobbying campaign to defend the financial privileges of Oxford and Cambridge universities was upset last week by the admission of a former college head that academic bursars have been hoodwinking governments for the past 20 years.

Sir Christopher Ball, Oxford's chief negotiator in the 1980s, said the universities consistently outsmarted civil servants to secure excessive annual increases in the "college fee", a special subsidy to support the Oxbridge tutorial system, currently worth £35 million a year.

"We were shocked at the way the Government didn't do its job looking after the public interest. It was like taking candy from children and it was not much fun," he said.

"What we did was indefensible in moral terms. It was a form of corruption that was never intended because we were not corrupt people. But it turned into corruption and we can't afford for our two major universities to be tinged with dishonesty."

His admission came at a private meeting of Oxford college bursars earlier this month. Although no text of Sir Christopher's speech was available, he confirmed the remarks in an interview with the Guardian.

Colin Lucas, the vice-chancellor of Oxford university, said the suggestion of corruption was "ludicrous" and "clearly gratuitous". University sources also tried to undermine the credibility of Sir Christopher by describing him as a maverick "Mr Grudge".

The university said Oxbridge colleges needed £2,000 more in fees per student to support the tutorial system.

The Government has asked the Higher Education Funding Council for England to review Oxbridge funding. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, and the Education Secretary, David Blunkett, are understood to want to divert at least some of the money to maintain standards at other universities and colleges when tuition fees are introduced next year. But the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, is urging caution after coming under pressure from Oxford, his former university.

In a four-hour debate in the House of Lords on the future of the two universities, Labour peers joined forces with their Opposition counterparts to urge the Government not to jeopardise the quality of teaching at Oxford and Cambridge by reducing funding. They warned that withdrawal of the special funding would make the establishments even more socially exclusive by forcing them to charge "top-up" tuition fees. The existence of some smaller colleges would be threatened.

Oxford's Chancellor, Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, a former Labour cabinet minister and now Liberal Democrat peers' leader, said Oxford and Cambridge were two of only eight world-class universities. It would be "a perverse act of national self-mutilation" to "deliberately or even inadvertently throw away this position".

But in his earlier remarks, Sir Christopher, the 62-year-old chairman of the National Campaign for Learning, said: "Nobody who has any knowledge of the two universities really believes that Oxford and Cambridge cannot cope with the ending of publicly-funded college fees by using college endowments and fund-raising strengths."

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CBI warns Blair on fees

Larry Elliott

BRITISH business leaders are urging the Government to rethink the details of its plans for tuition fees after warning that they could deter students from going to university and exacerbate Britain's skills shortage.

Concerned about the impact of £1,000 fees on poorer families, the Confederation of British Industry said at its annual conference that the income threshold at which charges will be levied should be raised by 50 per cent.

The CBI granted that the fees would lessen the immediate pressure on taxpayer funding. It also recognised the need for students to contribute more towards the cost of their learning.

"However, it is essential that the new financial arrangements do not act as a disincentive or barrier to the take-up of higher education," it said. "There is a real risk that numbers entering higher education will fall and this could have a detrimental impact on skill levels and on UK competitiveness."

To prevent this happening, the CBI wanted the family income threshold above which payment must be made for fees to be raised from the proposed £16,000-£18,000 to £25,000.

However, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, defended the Government's reforms, arguing they would lead to the end of the cap on student numbers and result in more resources going into science and research.

Listing six principles to achieve economic prosperity, Mr Blair said: "The absolute number one priority for domestic policy is education and skills. We will win by brains or not at all. We will compete on enterprise and talent or we will fail."

With Britain now spending a smaller proportion of national income on education than it did at the end of the 1970s, the CBI said that overall spending might have to be increased and that there was a "strong case for increased taxpayer funding".

The employers' organisation said that spending more on education and transport should be a priority for the Government, but that ministers should set a firm ceiling of 40 per cent on the amount of public spending paid for by taxes and borrowing.

Massacre puts Egypt on rack

TOURISM in Luxor is over for this season and perhaps for many seasons to come. The occasional deaths of large numbers of tourists at the hands of extremists over the past five years were discounted by a travel industry which sends hundreds of thousands of visitors to Egypt every year. Discounted, too, by the tourists themselves, encouraged to see such statistically insignificant incidents as on a par with the occasional mugging or coach accident. But the systematic massacre of scores of men and women at Luxor this week cannot be ignored and will not be forgotten. Five years ago, the extremists warned foreigners not to enter the southern province of Qena if they valued their lives. They have now made that warning good, and at the same time badly damaged an industry on which as many as 10 million Egyptians directly or indirectly depend. Tourism is Egypt's biggest single source of foreign exchange, and the most attractive field for foreign investment. The impact of the Luxor killings goes beyond Egypt. At Doha, in Qatar, where a diminished handful of Arab states is meeting with Israel to discuss regional economic development, the news caused further gloom at an already gloomy gathering. The links between the progress of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and the actions of extremist groups are real, even if such groups have an indigenous base and local objectives. A victory, then, for terrorism. Yes, but the story is more complicated.

The Islamic extremists in Egypt have been losing their struggle with government forces. They have been flushed out of Cairo and have retreated to Upper Egypt, from which region most of them originate. Twenty thousand are in jail. Many of those in jail and many of those at large have grown tired of the struggle. Some regret their deeds and want to be able to return to normal life. It was against this background that a number of their imprisoned leaders this year called for a ceasefire, a call endorsed by some prestigious figures outside. Others repudiated it, and the movement is now clearly split. In any case, there was no positive response from the government, no talks, no releases of prisoners or speeding up of the judicial process. Government round-ups and arrests went on. Whether Luxor is a desperate last throw by an intransigent minority within a movement that has been showing readiness to make its peace with the the government, or whether it represents a revival of that movement's programme of violence in a more intense and ruthless form, is hard to know. It will not be known until the Egyptian government tests the sincerity of those who want a ceasefire. Luxor will make that more difficult but it still ought to be done.

Microsoft plays hard ball

THE BATTLE for control of cyberspace may be entering its end game and the question is whether consumers will be taken to the cleaners in the process. Last week the United States group WorldCom beat off British Telecom to take control of MCI, giving the merged company control of 60 per cent of the fibre optic "backbone" that carries Internet traffic. Will the merged company one day use its market power to start charging for use of its conduits, hitherto merely the cost of a local phone call? More important, Ralph Nader, the champion of US consumers, last week organised a conference in Washington to protest about Microsoft's alleged dominance not only of the access to the Internet but also its content. Microsoft has complained bitterly that Mr Nader's conference has been packed with anti-Microsoft speakers, but that's not the point. Microsoft is the most successful company on earth, a situation it has reached through brilliance and a ferocious competitiveness that draws claims of dirty tricks from its rivals. The US department of justice is seeking to fine Microsoft $1 million a day for allegedly insisting (in breach of an agreement) that some computer manufacturers insert a Microsoft product as the Internet "browser" that appears on the screen when a computer is powered up.

This is serious because Microsoft's operating system is installed in more than 80 per cent of the world's personal computers. If its browser is given free with the operating system, what chance has anyone else of competing on a level playing field? Microsoft's rival, Netscape (a one-product company) has 60 per cent of the world browser market but Microsoft has been gaining ground strongly. Bill Gates, chairman of Microsoft, asks who should decide what goes into their computer — the government or software companies? Put like that the answer is obvious. But ask the question another way — whether it should be the monopolist Microsoft or free competition among software suppliers that should decide what innovations go into computers — and the answer is different.

Microsoft argues cogently that its Windows operating system provides an open platform that encourages competition among thousands of software suppliers, generating a huge number of jobs. Mr Gates argues that forbidding his company to bundle its own browser would be like insisting that Ford dealers should be able to replace a Ford engine with a Toyota one. This is disingenuous. Ford doesn't control nearly 85 per cent of the world market. A company that controls 85 per cent of the access points to the gateway to the information revolution and which is also one of the biggest content providers is a potentially dangerous monopoly whose conduct must be rigorously investigated. It is no use waiting until its rivals have withered on the bough.

Short, simple and radical

THE NATIONAL minimum wage is one of the UK government's most radical proposals and it is important that ministers get it right. Handled properly it could relieve poverty at the lower end of the income scale without rekindling inflation. Handled badly — for example, if the minimum wage is set too high — it could trigger a fresh wave of redundancies and a beggar-my-neighbour round of wage increases as other groups of workers try to restore their lost differentials. Judging by the letter from Margaret Beckett, Secretary for Trade and Industry, to Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Government could still go off the tracks. In the letter it is claimed that Peter Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio, has asked whether exemptions from the minimum wage should be extended to the regions, certain sectors or smaller companies. This is a tempting option (endorsed by the Liberal Democrats) on the grounds that some regions are much richer than others and labour-intensive companies in some sectors could not continue in existence if they had to pay the same minimum wage as richer companies.

Tempting but wrong. The *national* minimum wage should be just that. Once exemptions are granted there is no saying where it will all end. The NMW is as much ethical as it is economic: it is the wage below which it is not right to employ people wherever they live and in whatever industry. If the price of uniformity is that the NMW itself is lower than it otherwise might have been, then so be it.

This doesn't mean that there shouldn't be any exceptions at all, merely that they shouldn't jeopardise the concept of a single minimum level. The Low Pay Commission has quite rightly been asked to consider whether young people should be excluded from the minimum until they are in their mid-20s. There might be a case if it could be proved to boost employment by encouraging companies to take on more young people. This will inevitably produce anomalies such as youngsters working side by side with only a year or two difference in their ages yet getting different pay. But this will solve itself over time. What cannot be tolerated is companies taking youngsters on for a few years only to sack them just before they reach the age at which the full minimum would be paid.

The Government should move quickly to establish the minimum wage if only because the economy is starting to experience a shortage of labour so that anyone unfortunate enough to lose their job as a result of its introduction might more easily find work elsewhere. Indeed, on an optimistic scenario, the introduction of the NMW and the Government's welfare-to-work schemes early next year may so improve the supply of labour that the economy can run at a slightly faster speed without rekindling inflation. The trouble is that those displaced by the minimum wage won't necessarily have the skills needed where labour shortages are reported. Some of the welfare-to-work projects do involve training or retraining. The question is whether the training programmes can respond rapidly enough to the emergent skills shortages. The obvious solution to this is a rapid-response retraining initiative to reskill people as quickly as possible.

Why Oxbridge élitism should be nurtured

Alan Ryan

THE government decision to take up Sir Ron Dearing's suggestion that it ought to ask whether the public gets good value from the college fees paid to Oxbridge colleges has predictably generated more heat than light. At the risk of alienating all my colleagues, let me offer a quick guide to what is at stake. First, how much money is at stake? Roughly £35 million. This represents about a sixth of the money the Higher Education Funding Council gives to Oxford and Cambridge altogether. Second, why does it look unfair? Because it adds £2,000 a year to the £4,000 — on average — that the council pays for teaching each student in England. That discrepancy is insignificant compared with the discrepancy in research funding that Oxbridge gets; but it is harder to persuade the public that fairness requires us to spread research funding so as to be nice to less competent researchers.

Is it unfair? Yes, it is unfair in just the same way that the training lavished on Manchester United footballers is unfair. Oxford and Cambridge are the Manchester United of the educational system; their best students are cleverer, more confident, livelier and more imaginative than the vast majority of their age group. They write better, think more exactly, and are more educable than their peers — all of which makes them no better than anyone else in the eyes of God, but does make them better suited to an intensive education, the like of which they could get at Cal Tech, MIT, Princeton and about half a dozen other places in the world, of which two are still, just, situated in Britain.

Why is the proposed removal of what is, after all, not a very large proportion of the total budget of Oxford and Cambridge such a big deal? Because Oxford and Cambridge have pulled off something that is still envied by the best American colleges and universities. In the United States, colleges such as Williams, Amherst, Swarthmore, and the like provide a wonderful (and very expensive) undergraduate education in colleges of about 1,500 to 2,000 students. They have no graduate programmes, and their faculties teach very long hours. The so-called research universities provide a mass education for large undergraduate bodies and do their serious work at the graduate level. Princeton, Harvard, Yale, Chicago, Stanford, Duke and a dozen others do their utmost to combine the intensive liberal education of the best colleges with a world-beating graduate and research programme. That is essentially what Oxford and Cambridge do. Sentimental guff about tutors is beside the point; it is not the tutorial set-up that matters but what that represents — an intensity of education that nowhere else in Britain can touch.

It is difficult to do it, and it is everywhere getting harder, because the standing temptation for clever academics is to spend their time advancing their research careers. The only device anyone has yet discovered to make very clever people wear themselves out in the service of both their undergraduates and their own discipline is some sort of college system. The difficulty is to preserve the autonomy of colleges inside a university framework; and that is why fees matter.

Oxbridge college fees are not a "top-up"; they are charged by colleges to students as they have been for centuries, and only a proportion of students get their fees paid by someone else. Most graduates pay their own. What matters is that fees provide an income independent of the favour of expensive science departments and their research programmes. That is why the loss of a comparatively small sum could wreck the delicate college-university balance which underpins the success of Oxford and Cambridge.

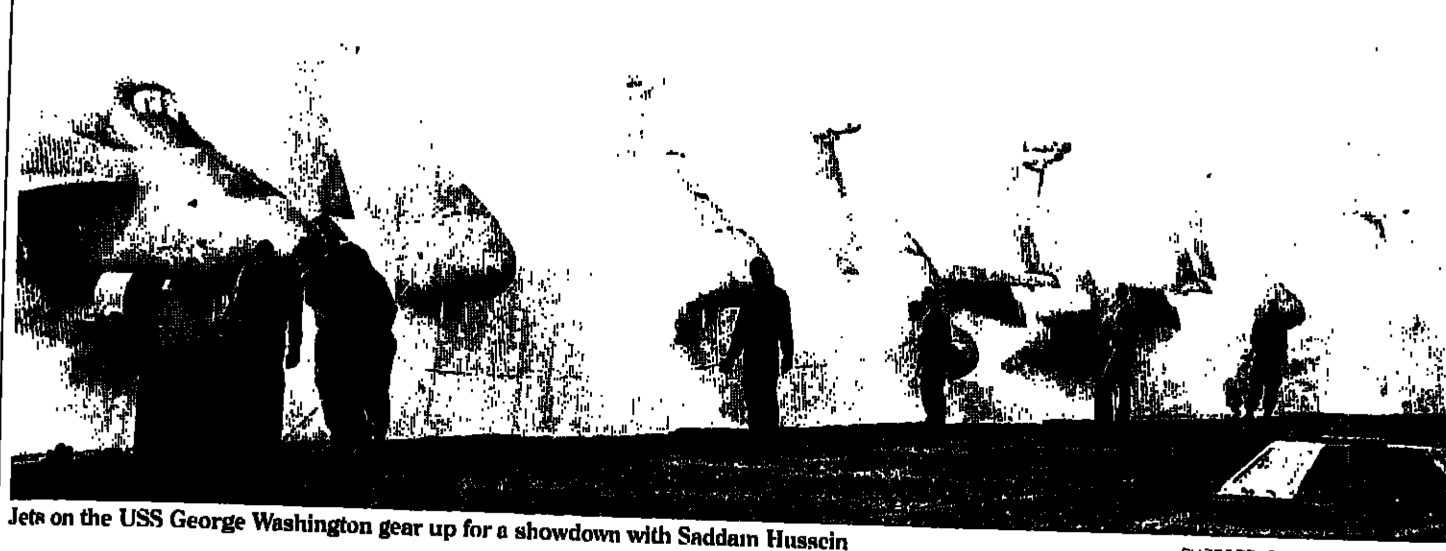
Is this an élitist argument? In one sense, of course it is. Who wants to have a non-élite brain surgeon work on his brain? Who wants Pushkin translated by someone who can't read Russian and can't write English? The search for excellence is the search for an élite. Ask Alex Ferguson.

More deeply, it is not élitist; it's an argument about merit, ambition, and hope. The Education Secretary, David Blunkett, goes on about making Oxbridge accessible to the 93 per cent of the population who don't go to private schools. The answer is that what's worth having in Oxbridge is accessible already. A good education is like Everest: if you feel like climbing it, and you have the right skills, there it is. The question an education minister might do better to ask is why the state schools do such a rotten job of inspiring their students. The North London primary school I went to in 1945 had no doubt that it should show working-class children the way to a better world than their parents had lived in. This is surely what is meant by the "ladder of opportunity".

THE question about fairness is not whether it is worth spending money on Oxbridge; it is why Britain is such a miserably unambitious country. Oxford and Cambridge are about to accept 6,000 new students; at the same time they will refuse some 12,000 school students, most of whom will go on to get three A grades at A level. Why isn't anyone demanding two new universities which will stretch these students as they ought to be stretched? In the US, Harvard set a model to be emulated; John D Rockefeller duly founded the University of Chicago and Leland Stanford's ill-gotten gains paid for Stanford. They did not set out to wreck Harvard. Can Britain really have so completely run out of ambition?

Does it follow that the Government ought to pay the whole bill for Oxbridge, or indeed for anywhere else? Absolutely not. Given a sensible loan and scholarship system, students and their families can be encouraged to invest in their own futures. But a Government that insists on refusing to allow universities to charge what they need in order to do a decent job, and which pretends that students can get a world-class university education on the cheap, is either misleading the public or misleading itself.

Dr Alan Ryan is Warden of New College, Oxford. He was Professor of Politics at Princeton (1988-1996)



Jets on the USS George Washington gear up for a showdown with Saddam Hussein

PHOTOGRAPH: JOSEPH HENDRICKS

Saddam vs the United States (again)

That trouble in the Gulf never fully went away, **Martin Woollacott** and **Ian Black** report

THE confrontation between the United States and Iraq over weapons inspections is the most serious clash between the two states since the 1991 Gulf war.

Immediately at stake is the future of the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (Unscom), set up after the war to ensure the destruction of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. If Iraq manages to marginalise the commission, as it has been trying to do over recent weeks, it will have humiliated the US and Britain, definitively split the UN Security Council powers, and set itself on the road to getting sanctions lifted without giving up its secret weapons programmes.

If the US prevails, through diplomacy or military action, it will have checked but not necessarily weakened Saddam Hussein — unless it decides on a full-scale attack aimed at destroying the forces underpinning his regime. This is the win, draw or lose drama currently being played out.

The dangerous game of hide-and-seek that led to the crisis started in earnest last year, when Unscom inspectors first tracked weapons programmes down to specific buildings and camps belonging to Iraqi intelligence and to units of Saddam's loyal Revolutionary Guard. Documents, production equipment and stocks of materials and finished weapons, it was found, were held inside intelligence installations and Guard camps. The documents included papers on Iraq's efforts to import missile parts, and items detailing the import of nerve-gas materials. Last month, inspectors on a routine visit to a Baghdad laboratory surprised men carrying kits for testing three deadly biological agents.

Unscom had long determined that the Iraqis were acting in bad faith. Inspection teams have been shot at and harassed; last September, an Iraqi "minder" seized the controls of a UN helicopter over a Republican Guard base and forced it to land. Over the years, fully half of all short-notice inspections have had to be aborted because of Iraqi objections and excuses. The arms inspectors then discovered a well-organised system aimed at deceiving them: one cache of sensitive documents was hidden on a chicken farm, while other papers have reportedly been granted diplomatic immunity in Baghdad's Palestinian embassy.

A new Iraqi strategy has also emerged: Unscom has been called an instrument of US espionage. The Iraqis have argued that they had destroyed all their weapons, and that the commission was actually there to spy on its most secret installations. Last month, they suddenly said they would no longer accept the presence of Unscom inspectors of American nationality. "What they want," said Rolf Ekeus, Unscom's former head, "is to create an alternative mechanism that would make it easier for them to talk their way out of sanctions without giving up their most secret weapons."

Unscom's current chairman, Richard Butler, like Ekeus before him, has to walk a tightrope, with the US and Britain missing no opportunity to make clear their mistrust of the Iraqi leader. But talking to the Guardian last month, Butler dismissed the suggestion that, whatever Unscom finds, the US and Britain will insist on maintaining sanctions as long as Saddam is in power. "If we can say that all the weapons systems are accounted for, then notwithstanding what some members of the Security Council may feel about Iraq's president, I have no reason to believe they will turn their backs on this mechanism, and sanctions will wither away," he said.

At an earlier period the recent Iraqi manoeuvres would have met with united international opposition. The decisive change now is that France, Russia and China have openly opposed the US. In June, Iraqi evasions of the inspections regime were already so bad that the Security Council condemned them without abstentions. But the differences between the US and Britain on the one hand, and France and Russia on the other, together with the cool attitude of the US's Arab allies, meant that the Council threatened only modest, delayed sanctions. When, after further Iraqi violations, the US proposed that these sanctions be put into operation, France, Russia and China abstained. As Ekeus says, the vote "provided an opening for Iraq" which Saddam seized. Even now, Russia and France still oppose military action, even though they agree that Saddam must accept resumed Unscom monitoring. The likely result is that Iraq will be faced only with the same modest sanctions originally proposed in the summer.

Unscom's certification is required before the Security Council will lift the oil embargo that has crippled Iraq's economy and starved its people. Viewed from the banks of the Tigris, Unscom means hunger, destitution and soaring infant mortality rates. Russia and France argue that the policies of the US and Britain give Saddam no incentive for good behaviour. On the other hand, they say, the US seems unwilling to or incapable of pushing Saddam from power. This being so, they argue for some normalisation.

The commercial background is that French and Russian firms have made potentially lucrative agreements to exploit Iraqi oil once sanctions are lifted; and Iraq's present "friends" could expect other pay-offs once Baghdad begins again to enjoy a daily income of $60 million.

Western countries know that Unscom's work matters because they helped Saddam amass his arsenal long before he invaded Kuwait in August 1990. During the bloody eight-year war against Khomeini's Iran, the Soviet Union and France respectively supplied 47 per cent and 28 per cent of Iraq's major weapons systems. Companies in the US, Germany, Sweden and Britain did their bit too. On the very day Iraqi troops marched into Kuwait, the French government was due to sign a deal to cover Iraq's $2.16 billion debts to French companies.

There was plenty of money to be made, but nagging concerns too. Many countries were outraged in public but privately pleased when Israel bombed the Tammuz nuclear reactor in 1981. And there was horror and disbelief in 1988 when chemical weapons were used against Iraqi Kurds at Halabja. The Scud missiles that hit Israel and Saudi Arabia during the Gulf war were little more than flying dustbins. But they were still fairly accurate and could have caused massive casualties if equipped with efficient chemical warheads.

Saddam has ridden out at least two coup attempts, and has gradually improved his position. Just over a year ago, he took advantage of divisions among the Kurds to put troops back into an area that had been effectively denied to him by the Allied "Provide Comfort" operation, which keeps a constant air umbrella over northern Iraq. Although he withdrew his troops quickly, his influence in the north has grown

Saddam's twisting of the UN agreement that he could sell a small quantity of oil (whose proceeds would go into a UN-controlled fund for humanitarian purposes) also added to his prestige. In effect, the regime speculated on oil futures and secured the foreign exchange the provision sought to deny them.

In the unlikely event that the crisis does come to military action, it is probable that another "token" effort like that in September 1996 would not much affect Saddam's position. Only a full-scale series of attacks on the forces closest to Saddam could do that. But the US is not much inclined to bold action, and can find no support for a serious military campaign. Unless Saddam makes a foolish mistake the crisis will probably be resolved by diplomacy, in which case Saddam will once again have survived, and his position probably strengthened.

Japan admits its economy is stalled

Charlotte Denny

THE Japanese authorities have now admitted what outsiders have been saying for some time — the economy is no longer in recovery but back on the ropes.

The Economic Planning Agency in Tokyo said on Friday last week, in its monthly report for November, that the economy had "stalled". Outsiders speak of recession or, worse, a deflationary spiral.

The news sent the Nikkei tumbling to a two-year low by the end of trading that day and raised fears that Japan's indebted banking sector would have to sell bonds to make up for their losses on the stock market. The banks hold much of their capital in the form of company shares and have suffered heavily from the 2,000-point fall in the Nikkei over the past few months.

An asset firesale by Japan's banks would be a nightmare, and not just for policy-makers in Tokyo. Japan's position as the world's second largest economy means that the United States takes its troubles far more seriously than the summer's upheavals elsewhere in Asia. The Japanese are also the world's biggest holders of US debt. If Japan's troubled banks were forced to sell US Treasury bonds, the US deficit would become a lot more expensive to fund.

Robust growth once disguised the fundamental weakness of Japan's banking sector. But the economy has been faltering since the start of the decade. The last kick-start to the economy ended in April when sales tax went back up to 5 per cent from 3 per cent, and consumers have been sulking ever since. Economic growth this year may be as low as half of one per cent.

The government's response to the troubles of the banking sector has been to encourage strong institutions to take over failing ones, in effect penalising good management and allowing bad banks to survive while hoping the economy will recover so the banks can restructure their loan portfolios and write off the hangover of bad debt they inherited when the property bubble of the late 1980s burst.

But with eight of the 10 biggest banks now failing to meet international guidelines for capital adequacy, and officials admitting the economy is stagnant, the government's approach has come under increasing fire. Investors say that the sector is in dire of need of reform and that it is time to allow the weakest institutions to go to the wall.

There are signs of a change of direction in Tokyo. On Monday the country's 10th biggest bank, Hokkaido Takushoku, announced that it was closing its doors. Whereas once the ministry of finance would have bullied a bigger bank into a rescue package, Tokyo's response this week was confined to guaranteeing depositors' funds.

The bold decision to allow a bank to go down was immediately rewarded. The Nikkei rebounded on Monday, ending the day up 8 per cent, its largest one-day gain for seven years.

Comments from the prime minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, on Tuesday that the government is considering an injection of public spending to boost the economy raised investors spirits further, although the long-awaited economic stimulus package contained no extra funds.

Analysts warn that although Japan may be back from the brink, there are still serious problems that Tokyo must address. There is no economic recovery in sight and massive currency devaluations by its Asian neighbours threaten to depress the economy further. Initial euphoria about the government's decisive action will wear off and underlying structural problems in the financial sector remain.

The options for policy-makers are stark. Some analysts say that an industry shake-out is inevitable and that the government should allow a cull of weaker institutions. Whether this week's bank closure will be the first of many remains to be seen. A crisis of confidence in the banking sector could bring the whole house of cards crashing down. Many outsiders doubt that the government has the courage to go through with radical reform.

In Brief

SIR PETER DAVIES, chief executive of the Prudential, Britain's largest private pensions provider, said he was "ashamed" of his company's role in the scandal over the mis-selling of personal pensions. Previously, the company had refused to acknowledge its culpability in the $6.7 billion scandal — by far the most expensive in UK financial history.

THE Bank of England is braced for a rise in unemployment next year as its tough measures to clamp down on inflation send the economy into a sharp slowdown during 1998. The Bank is forecasting annual growth to slow from its current rate of 4 per cent to 1.5 per cent.

BRITISH AIRWAYS is to offer cheap air fares to Europe from early next year through a "no-frills" company that will fly out of Stansted airport, Essex. Barbara Cassani, aged 37, was named its chief executive.

EASTMAN KODAK has announced plans to slash 10,000 jobs — 10.5 per cent of its workforce — as the world's largest photography company reels under blows from Japanese and other foreign competitors.

CREDITORS in the crashed Bank of Credit and Commerce International could have nearly half their money back by next June, liquidators said.

BARCLAYS BANK sold the bulk of its BZW City banking arm to Crédit Suisse First Boston for $160 million, much less than its true worth, analysts said.

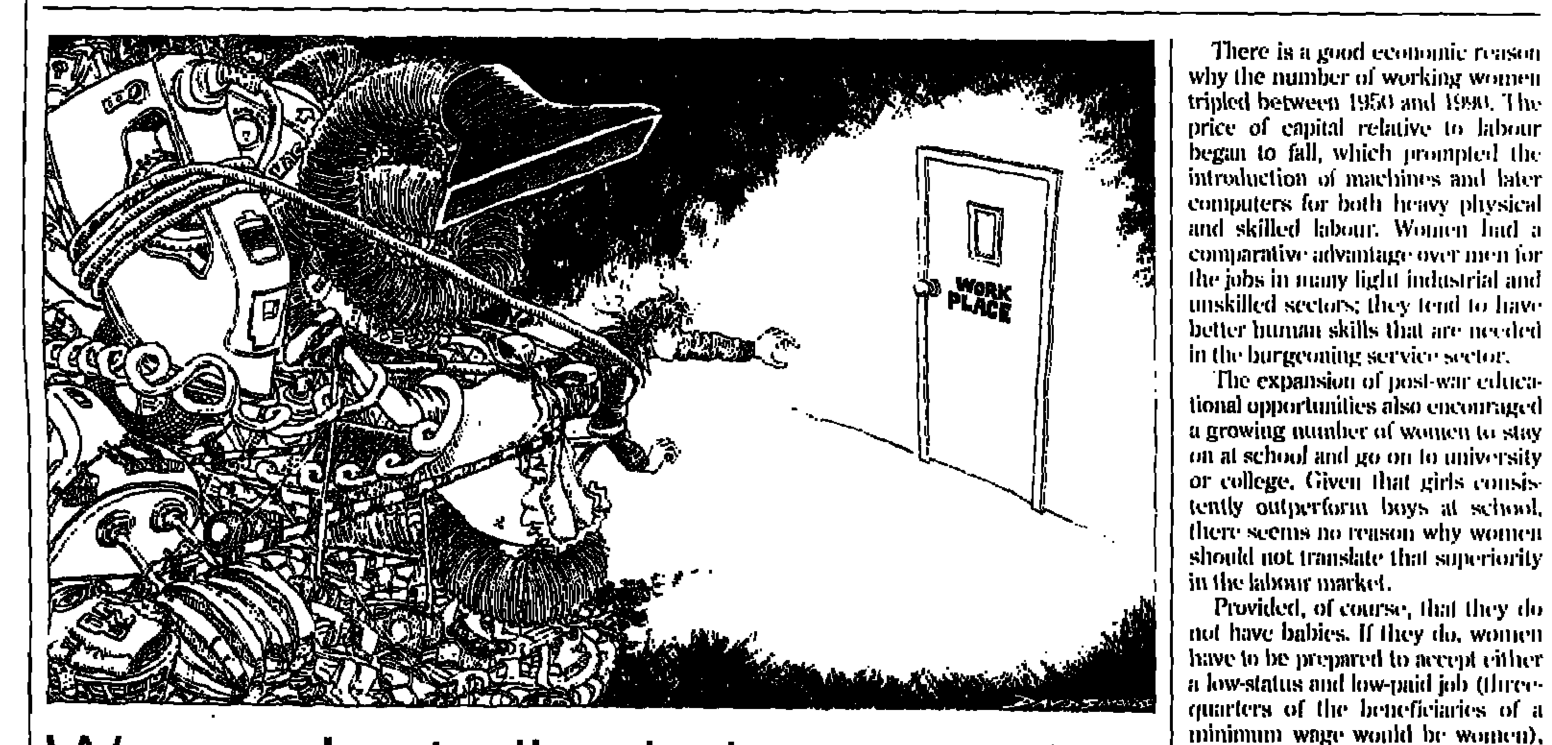
MARK BOOTH has taken over the reins at BSkyB, the world's leading satellite pay TV operation, after chief executive Sam Chisholm stood down.

NEW 1,000-lire Italian coins appeared portraying Germany still split between east and west. Even worse, the map shows the Netherlands incorporated into a Greater Germany. A new design is being prepared.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates November 17	Sterling rates November 10
Australia	2.4213-2.4258	2.4198-2.4239
Austria	20.64-20.66	20.31-20.33
Belgium	60.47-60.58	59.52-59.63
Canada	2.3918-2.3937	2.3720-2.3741
Denmark	11.16-11.17	10.98-10.99
France	9.82-9.83	9.66-9.67
Germany	2.9336-2.9357	2.8863-2.888
Hong Kong	13.08-13.09	13.03-13.04
Ireland	1.1245-1.1271	1.1095-1.113
Italy	2,872-2,876	2,827-2,831
Japan	212.79-213.00	209.22-209.45
Netherlands	3.3065-3.3095	3.2501-3.253
New Zealand	2.6968-2.7009	2.6930-2.6974
Norway	11.96-11.97	11.73-11.75
Portugal	299.03-299.32	294.49-294.8
Spain	247.42-247.66	243.71-243.9
Sweden	12.76-12.78	12.62-12.64
Switzerland	2.3854-2.3879	2.3477-2.35
USA	1.6926-1.6932	1.6868-1.6875
ECU	1.4817-1.4832	1.4624-1.464

FTSE100 Share Index up 60.2 at 4867.0. FTSE 250 Index down 18.7 at 4628.0. Gold down $7.00 at $303.75.



Women's sterile choice at work

Larry Elliott on how the modern workplace can damage family life

AMONG the normal romps about the way to the perfect orgasm and lingerie to die for, last month's UK edition of Cosmopolitan carried an article about a 25-year-old woman who had been sterilised. The gist was that she had no regrets; for modern women, having babies and having fun are incompatible.

This is more than a life-style choice. The economics of having a family do not stack up in the modern West. Where once big families were needed to bring in extra income, now having children means a big drop in personal disposable income. Lester Thurow, the American economist, says that children have stopped being profit centres and are now cost centres.

Brutally put, perhaps, but true. The size of the average family has fallen from five in 1920 to three in 1990. One reason the Green Belt around London is to be peppered with millions of new homes over the next 20 years is the demand for single-occupation properties.

As Fay Weldon says in a new book of essays for the Institute of Community Studies*: "Many [women] now prefer not to have children, which they may regret when they are in their 60s and 70s and older. But who at 30 ever thinks they'll get there, or if they do, will be living, feeling regretting sentient beings? Look around today and you see lots of women without children, who wouldn't dream of having them — they're having far too nice a time. They look at those who do have children, who have a terrible time, and who don't have enough disposable income, and feel sorry for them."

But at the same time that Cosmo woman is whooping it up with her mates, there is a backlash going on. Far from desiring workplace equality, it seems large numbers of women hanker for the old sexual division of labour, with the man as breadwinner and the woman as home-maker.

Catherine Hakim, drawing on research from several countries, argues that most mothers do not want to participate full-time in employment, certainly while their children are young. She writes: "Feminists have argued that modern women reject the role of full-time home-maker: that they seek to participate in the labour market on exactly the same basis as men, so that sex differentials in work rates or within the workforce can be read as the effects of discrimination rather than personal choice; and that as soon as the barriers come down, women will flood into wage work on a full-time basis if at all possible. I held this view once. My research proved me wrong."

Single women and married women without children can go for the live-hard, play-hard option. For them, the challenge in a competitive workplace is to show that they can do the job as well as men. Most can. But increasingly parents resent the hours they are expected to put in.

Now, when a counter-revolution is in the air, the Government is trying to help single parents (ie, mothers) back into the labour force. Is Harriet Harman barking up the wrong tree? Should she, as Minister for Women, be urging mothers to stay in the home, even though the evidence suggests that plugging people back into the labour market is the surest way of lifting them out of poverty? The answer is no. In the long term, Ms Harman is right, provided we take a good, hard look at the way modern Britain is organised.

There is a good economic reason why the number of working women tripled between 1950 and 1990. The price of capital relative to labour began to fall, which prompted the introduction of machines and later computers for both heavy physical and skilled labour. Women had a comparative advantage over men for the jobs in many light industrial and unskilled sectors; they tend to have better human skills that are needed in the burgeoning service sector.

The expansion of post-war educational opportunities also encouraged a growing number of women to stay on at school and go on to university or college. Given that girls consistently outperform boys at school, there seems no reason why women should not translate that superiority in the labour market.

Provided, of course, that they do not have babies. If they do, women have to be prepared to accept either a low-status and low-paid job (three-quarters of the beneficiaries of a minimum wage would be women), the existence of a glass ceiling, or a life spent juggling pressure, child care and guilt in equal quantities.

What can be done? So far, only two implausible solutions have been proposed. The first is that women should get back in the home, with the clock turned back to Macmillan's Britain or Eisenhower's America. The alternative is that working women recognise that they cannot have it all and stop having children.

Almost no interest has been shown in the other part of the equation, the nature of the world of work. This omission needs to be rectified. But this is a matter of economics — cutting the length of the working week, establishing a decent minimum wage, giving people the legal right to build up a bank of time off owed, to be taken when they choose. A truly flexible economy would allow men and women to divide up their working lives into chunks, so that they worked 40 per cent of their total hours when they were single or childless and 40 per cent when they were empty-nesters, but only 20 per cent while their children were growing.

But Britain's economic system is not truly flexible at all: it is relentless, sapping and short-termist.

*Rewriting the Sexual Contract, published by ICS, 18 Victoria Park Square, London E2 9PF, £12.50

Brazilians forced to tighten their belts

Jean-Jacques Sévilla in Rio de Janeiro

"WHEN a hurricane is forecast, you don't plan a picnic in the garden," said the Brazilian planning minister, Antonio Kandir, on television on November 10 to back up what he described as the "harshness" of the 50 economic measures announced by the government.

Brazil's social democrat president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, is determined to do all he can to defend the "real plan" — the stabilisation programme that successfully launched the new currency, the real, in July 1994, but which has now been adversely affected by the repercussions of Asia's financial crisis. That is why he has opted for a vigorous response.

The bill that the government has referred to the federal congress is more ambitious than was expected, and should make it possible, together with the interest rate rise decided upon last week, to avoid the need to devalue the real.

Under the provisions of the plan, the budget deficit, currently about 4.7 per cent of annual gross domestic product (GDP), should be brought down to 2.5 per cent, thus generating savings of 20 billion reals ($17 billion).

"There's no worse tax than inflation," Cardoso said in a television announcement. Although it is true that the real plan put an end to rampant inflation, chiefly to the advantage of the most underprivileged — after soaring to more than 1,000 per cent in the eighties, it fell to 10 per cent in 1996 — the battery of measures about to be introduced to rescue the plan will hurt the taxpayer.

Income tax, for example, is set to rise by between 1 per cent and 2.5 per cent, while there will be a 5 per cent increase in taxes on drink and petrol.

The government has pledged to make a 15 per cent cut in its planned budget for next year, without affecting funding earmarked for education, health and the agrarian reform programme. The final turn of the screw will be the abrogation of regional tax privileges and a massive axing of public sector jobs (involving up to 30,000 federal employees).

Although the public appears to be puzzled by the austerity plan, initial reactions to it have, on the whole, been positive. After tumbling by a total of 32 per cent over the previous 12 days' trading, the São Paulo stock exchange had gained almost 2 per cent by the close of trading on November 10.

In the course of a two-day official visit to Brazil, the Argentine president, Carlos Menem, said the austerity plan had his "full support". A forced devaluation of the Brazilian real would be a disaster for Argentina, a third of whose exports go to Brazil within the framework of Mercosur (the customs union made up of Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay).

Michel Camdessus, director general of the International Monetary Fund, said he was delighted with Cardoso's "determination". At the same time, however, he reminded the Brazilian president that the structural reform bills that are a vital ingredient needed to give muscle to the real plan are still languishing in the Brazilian congress.

The speculative attacks recently launched against the Brazilian currency eventually forced the government to wheel out its big guns. The central bank raised its base rate from 20 per cent to 43 per cent at the end of October. When this huge rate rise failed to stem the erosion of the country's foreign currency reserves, the government resolved to put an end to the imbalance in its finances, which was making the economy increasingly vulnerable.

The rescue of the real plan will involve painful sacrifices that are bound to result in recession. Cardoso, who hopes to win a second term at the presidential election in October 1988, says he is "not afraid of being unpopular".

But with that election looming, the leftwing opposition — which has recently been at a low ebb — has found fresh grounds for optimism.

(November 12)



President Cardoso defends his austerity measures at a press conference last week PHOTO: DIDA SAMPAIO

Will France accept a higher law?

EDITORIAL

THE French prime minister, Lionel Jospin, will soon be forced to take sides on a sensitive issue that has been carefully shielded from public scrutiny. It is important none the less, since it involves France's stand on one of the most ambitious projects ever hatched by the United Nations — a permanent tribunal that would pass judgment on the most serious breaches of universal human values.

It is also a highly topical issue: Maurice Papon is on trial in Bordeaux for crimes against humanity allegedly committed under the German Occupation of France; and France's leaders have begun to re-assess the official version of what happened under the Vichy regime.

But the issue is also extremely uncomfortable. It has put those who cherish human rights and those who argue in favour of realpolitik on a collision course.

Government ministers do not even agree among themselves. The justice minister, Elisabeth Guigou, rejects the arguments put forward by the foreign minister, Hubert Védrine, and the defence minister, Alain Richard, and has urged the government to rethink its extremely restrictive negotiating stance at the UN.

Were Jospin to be swayed by the moral arguments put forward by human rights activists and the justice minister, he would be faced with a serious problem in the government's "cohabitation" of the right and the left: President Jacques Chirac, who is under pressure from the military lobby, is fiercely opposed to the principle of an international court of justice that is independent of individual states. In taking that position, the president has isolated France from its Western partners.

What really lies behind France's attitude is its military hierarchy's mortal fear that, for example, General Bernard Janvier — a former commander of UN forces in Bosnia — may somehow be implicated in the events of July 1995 in Srebrenica, where a large proportion of the Muslim population was slaughtered under the noses of the Blue Helmets.

Some of the French military's misgivings are perfectly legitimate: troops that take part in peace-keeping operations must never be allowed to feel they might be vulnerable to arbitrary justice.

But it is one thing to protect the status of UN troops, and quite another to confuse independence with arbitrariness and to sabotage any plan for a truly independent international court of justice.

It is no longer even a question of ethics or of helping international justice to make headway. It is quite simply a question of law.

(November 8)

Czechs take their discontent to the streets

Martin Plichta in Prague

ON NOVEMBER 8, tens of thousands of demonstrators — 120,000 according to the organisers, fewer than 70,000 according to the police — took to the streets of Prague to protest against the policies of Vaclav Klaus's neo-liberal government.

Organised by the Czech Republic's main trade union confederation, CMKOS (to which 95 per cent of all trade union members belong), it was the biggest turnout since the wave of demonstrations that brought down the communist regime in 1989.

Eight years almost to the day since the "velvet revolution", CMKOS's president, Richard Falbr, was hissed at by sections of the crowd when he made it clear that the demonstration was not "against the regime".

Falbr, who is seen as being too conciliatory towards the government, managed to ensure that what was on the agenda on November 8 was a protest meeting, not a general strike that was called for by several federations, including the miners, railwaymen and metal-workers.

But he did tell the government, after making a scathing indictment of its policies, that the demonstration was "a final warning". The government had "squandered the country's financial resources and the trust of its citizens, both of which are the envy of governments in other former communist countries," he said.

"Wage-earners should not have to foot the bill for failed policies pursued in the interests of coalition parties and swindlers," Falbr added, before lambasting the government for its lax attitude towards the wave of liquidations that has hit banks, investment funds and companies. "We shall refuse to tighten our belts as we had to in 1991," he said.

The government, which introduced a series of austerity measures last spring, expects salaries to fall in real terms next year, after four years of rising living standards.

What is more, parliament recently approved a reduction in unemployment benefit — "already a pittance", according to Falbr — at a time when the unemployment rate has leapt in one year from 3.2 to 4.9 per cent of the working population.

At the end of the demonstration, those present adopted a declaration calling on the parties in the ruling coalition to "recognise their mistakes".

The prime minister, as usual, took little notice of "the handful of demonstrators" and clearly hinted that he would not be making any changes in his austerity programme. However, several of his ministers feel that the mounting wave of discontent in Czech society should be taken into account. They received indirect support from President Vaclav Havel, who left his hospital bed, where he was being treated for pneumonia, for an hour so that he could appoint three new ministers.

"Our society needs a project for the future and basic assurances. Above all, it needs hope," he said at the ceremony in Prague Castle, the seat of the presidency. He stressed that the population would "not be satisfied with a mere cabinet reshuffle". Opinion polls show that Czechs are in low spirits and have lost their trust in democratic institutions. Increasing numbers say they miss the previous regime.

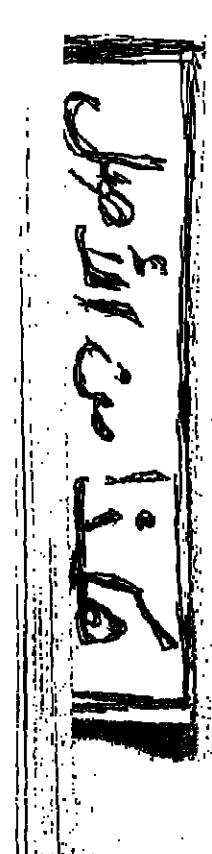
Meanwhile Milos Zeman's opposition Social Democrats (CSSD) decided on November 8 that they would table a motion of no confidence in the government during February's parliamentary session, after the expected re-election of Havel for a second five-year presidential term.

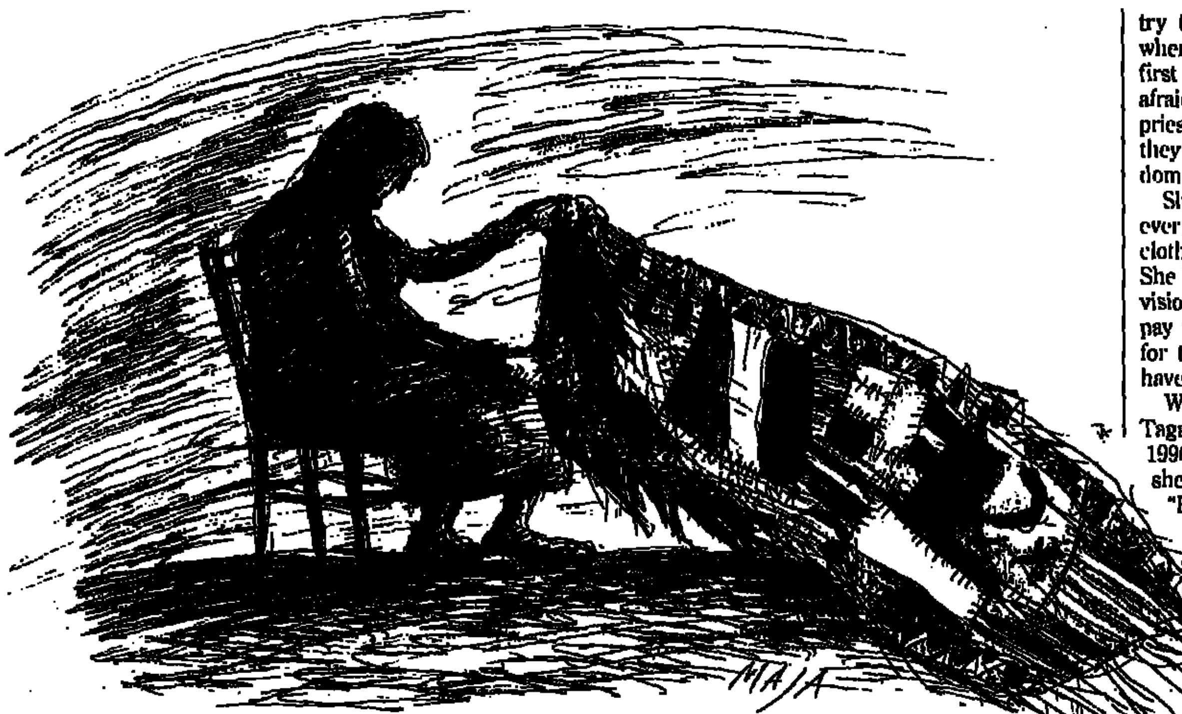
The CSSD hopes that in the next three months it will be able to win over one or two MPs belonging to the ruling coalition, whose votes they will need if their motion is to succeed.

The CSSD has already put out friendly feelers to Józef Zieleniec, the former foreign minister who resigned from the government on October 23 after a row with the prime minister. Zeman has offered him the job of heading a caretaker cabinet if an early election were to be held.

The political climate has not been improved by the row over the decision by the health minister, Jan Strasky, to close down Prague's biggest and most prestigious maternity hospital. Many suspect that the government wants to sell off the imposing Art Nouveau building and its grounds so that it can be turned into a hotel or a bank's headquarters.

(November 11)





Home is where Liliane's heart is

A woman who has fled from her family in Algeria for fear of Islamists talks to **Catherine Simon**

IF HER Alsatian mother had not resisted Nazi pressure in 1941 that she should take up German nationality again (at the time of her birth, Alsace was part of Germany), the young Liliane Bernardini might never have become, some 20 years later, the woman with kohl-ringed eyes who is pictured posing in front of her grocery-cum-café in the Berber village of Oued-Taga, in Algeria's rugged Aurès mountains.

And if the winds of hatred had not swept through Algeria in the early nineties, the woman whom the village children called "Roumia" (Frenchwoman) would perhaps never have had to face a further ordeal: in 1995, her husband and elder son threatened to denounce her to the Islamist *maquisards*, and she was forced to leave the village where she had made a new life for herself.

"It makes me feel faint to think of all that," Liliane says in her tiny flat in Troyes, southeast of Paris, where she landed two years ago. "Everything I've experienced in my life haunts me at night. I can't sleep."

Her mother was deported with her three children to the Almstadt concentration camp near the Polish border in 1941. "I helped my mother to clean the corpses," Liliane recalls. "Bones aren't heavy once they've been burnt. We put them in a wheelbarrow and took them along to the grinder."

In 1945, a few months before the Liberation, when she was six, a Nazi officer knocked her out with the butt of his rifle. Wounded at the back of the head, she remained unconscious for several hours. "He didn't think I was working fast enough," she says. The trauma, on top of deprivation and other ill-treatment, caused Liliane to suffer from epileptic fits for years.

After her release, she tried hard to forge a new life for herself. But nothing went right. A disastrous marriage to an Alsatian ended in divorce. Custody of her two daughters was given to their paternal grandmother.

Sick and rejected by her family, Liliane was too weak to work. One day, when she was wandering the streets of Strasbourg, she had a fit and collapsed. Two men ran up to help her. One of them was called Mohammed Amri. He was to change the course of her life.

"I was good-looking at the time. He took care of me. He respected me. It was the first time anyone had been so considerate towards me. He took me to his furnished flat and I stayed with him. I had enough to eat and a roof over my head. I didn't ask for more."

In October 1963, she took a boat to the Algerian port of Skikda, carrying nothing but a suitcase and her two-month-old baby. "I was happy — I thought I was just going on holiday and would return in a month or so, like a tourist. Mohammed hadn't told me anything." Liliane Amri, as she was shortly to become, stayed in Algeria for 32 years.

When she arrived at Oued-Taga, 20km south of Batna, the hamlet had only three small houses. There was no electricity (it was installed only in 1993) and no water mains. "I couldn't get to sleep the first night. I wondered what all those things were that were hanging from the ceiling. I was afraid they'd fall on my face. They were provisions tied to the beams: dried meat and tomatoes, pieces of cheese and so on." Liliane soon discovered other less picturesque aspects of rural Algeria. A week after arriving, she realised her papers had been stolen. "I didn't say anything at the time — I couldn't speak Berber yet. And what could I do? The cousins had simply obeyed my husband's orders. They always tricked me." From that day on, the "prisoner", as she calls herself, had to be patient and extremely cunning in order to impose herself on the village.

'When a young fellow joins the Islamists, they ask him to go back and kill members of his family'

Summers came and went, with their harvests of barley, wheat, apples, pears and figs. There were weddings too. "Before the civil war, festivities went on for six days and nights. We danced — men and women separately, but it was fun. Since 1994 people have been too afraid. A wedding nowadays is over and done with in a day."

Winters were very cold. More than once Liliane gave birth in front of the fire with snowflakes blowing under her front door. "I cut the cord myself with a razor blade. My mother-in-law was there too. Poor woman, she was trembling more than me!"

The inhabitants of Oued-Taga scarcely paid any attention to the death of President Houari Boumediene in December 1978 or the riots in Algiers 10 years later. But in December 1991 they all voted for the Islamic Salvation Front at the general election.

One of the few souvenirs of Algeria that Liliane brought back to France is a little bag of henna she pounded herself. Like all the women villagers in the mountainous region of Batna, she knew about the beneficial effects of plants. For a long time she made tisanes with *izri* (mugwort) as a remedy for her epilepsy.

It was by using a plant — "I can't remember its name, but there was a milky juice in its stem" — that she secretly performed an abortion on herself at the end of the sixties. "An old woman in the village told me what to do. Once placed in the vagina, the plant mixed with a little oil draws down the blood." It was an "extremely effective" method that almost all the women in Oued-Taga had used at one time or another — "otherwise they'd have had 15 or 20 kids". Liliane had six, four girls and two boys. When she tries to recall a date, she uses her children as a point of reference. She remembers, for example, that she met Father Philippe in the autumn of 1972 "because I'd already had Malika, Houria, Nourredine and Youcef".

Philippe Thirlez taught French at the high school in Batna, where there was a small Catholic community. With his help Liliane started speaking French again. "I'd almost forgotten everything, as I'd been speaking so much Berber. There are still words I forget."

He and his fellow priests in Batna encouraged her to get treated for epilepsy at the hospital and helped her to break out of the straitjacket of village life. "My husband would have forbidden me to see an Arab, but it was OK with a Frenchman."

Either because the villagers realised that Liliane would no longer try to run away from Oued-Taga, where she had managed to open its first grocery, or because they were afraid of the reaction of the "French priests" she was seeing so much of, they allowed Liliane greater freedom of movement from 1986 on.

She travelled to Batna almost every week wearing European clothes. Her shop was doing well. She introduced the villagers to television. To start with, she made them pay to see films: "It was one dinar for the film, and another dinar to have a chair to sit on."

When she last went back Oued-Taga "as a tourist" in the autumn of 1996, despite the risks involved, she counted three satellite dishes. "But they were well hidden — people are afraid of the Islamists."

So is she. The region has emptied of its inhabitants in the past three years. "When a young fellow joins the maquis, they ask him to go back and kill members of his family. He won't be accepted otherwise. But afterwards there's always a brother or uncle who wants to avenge the deaths. It's an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

Sometimes it is pro-government militiamen who do the killing. A peasant from the neighbouring village had his throat cut in the fields last September by four men wearing hoods "who suspected him of giving money to the terrorists". The mountains around Oued-Taga loom threateningly. "From 4pm on, it's a danger zone. There's no one on the roads. And as soon night falls, there not a living soul in the fields."

Liliane's husband, the same man who was once so considerate in a Strasbourg street, insisted that his wife obey Berber custom and not leave the house. If she refused, he was prepared, he said, to go "straight to the terrorists, whom he met while looking after his sheep".

But her son Youcef is worse. "Look at the hate in his eyes," she says, showing a photograph of her son in a tracksuit, a tall kid with a lot of attitude. "He never actually held it against me for being French, but it had something to do with it."

The young man, not content with bullying his handicapped younger brother and "regularly swiping his welfare benefit", wanted her to hand over her benefit too. "He was prepared to kill us all. He said so," she insists. The last time they met, mother and son had a flaming row. "When he realised I wanted to get his brother's papers back, he went crazy. He threatened to join the maquis. I know one day he will."

Liliane still calls Oued-Taga home, even though when she lived there people avoided looking her in the eye, and even though she once found a Christian cross daubed on her front door. She cannot understand why it should seem odd that she uses the word "home".

When she closes her eyes, she sees images of her village, the young people who used to come to her café-grocery and play draughts or dice, and with whom she used to have endless discussions; she sees the sunbaked, stony landscape, her little kitchen garden and the orchards in flower. "Out there, you pick a tomato and it tastes of something. Here in France it's funny, but I get the feeling I'm eating water."

Liliane is not certain she will ever go back to Oued-Taga. "It'll take 15-20 years for the violence to end. Too much hatred has built up, I guess. I won't ever see my kids again."

(November 5)

Operation Backpat

Nicole Bonnet in Lima

THE Japanese embassy building in the Peruvian capital, Lima, where 72 hostages were held for 126 days earlier this year by members of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), was demolished in October. The building, a not very accurate copy of the family house where the heroine of Gone With The Wind spends her childhood, was badly damaged when an élite army commando squad freed the hostages. The land on which it stood is currently the subject of a bitter controversy.

Lima's mayor would like to turn the 6,000 sq metre site in the upper-crust San Isidro quarter into a "park for peace". "Out of the question" shrill the neighbours, who, alerted by the tributes paid to Che Guevara 30 years after his death at the spot where his remains were discovered, already visualise with horror the crowds of pilgrims that would flood the area every December 17 and April 22 (the anniversaries of the beginning and end of the crisis). Japan, which owns the site, has so far maintained an embarrassed silence.

That has not stopped the army's top brass repeatedly celebrating the successful rescue operation and showering praise on its two architects, the army commander in chief, General Nicolas Hermoza Rios, and the head of the intelligence services, Vladimiro Montesinos, probably the adviser closest to President Alberto Fujimori's ear.

The operation, dubbed "Chavin de Huantar" because the tunnels dug to free the prisoners were similar to those in pre-Inca ruins of that name, cost the lives of all 14 MRTA hostage-takers, one of their victims and two commandos.

The controversy over who had been responsible for allowing the MRTA to seize the embassy at a time when Fujimori was claiming the guerrillas had been rendered harmless has passed. No such embarrassing questions are asked any more. On the contrary, there has been orgy of self-congratulation.

The latest bout of preening came on October 28, when Hermoza, accompanied by Montesinos, presented his book, Operation "Chavin de Huantar", full of praise for himself and his secret service colleague, to a select audience of diplomats, MPs and army officers. The hotel where the ceremony took place was sealed off and marksmen placed on rooftops. The show of force was justified: this was only the third time that the normally retiring Montesinos had been seen in public for seven years.

Last week, at a more private gathering, Hermoza's comrades in arms presented him with a so far unreleased recording of all the noises, screams and explosions heard inside the embassy during the assault. He was also given a maquette of the operation, with figurines of the MRTA hostage-takers made of silver, and those of the élite commandos made of gold.

(November 1)



Police inspect the car in which four U.S. businessmen and their driver were shot dead PHOTO: ZIAULLAH

Americans on Alert After Karachi Killings

Kenneth J. Cooper and Kamran Khan in Islamabad

AMERICANS in the Pakistani port city of Karachi took extra precautions against possible anti-U.S. attacks last week, and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif telephoned President Clinton to promise aggressive action to find the gunmen who killed four American oil company workers.

The State Department warned Americans to postpone nonessential trips to Pakistan because "the security situation in Karachi deteriorated seriously" with the ambush in rush-hour traffic that killed the four employees of Union Texas Petroleum Co. Two previously unknown groups separately took credit for the killings.

But an official of the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad indicated the claims are not considered credible. A third group, Harkat ul-Ansar, which the State Department has declared a terrorist organization, blamed unnamed groups seeking to destabilize Pakistan.

Pakistani security officials have said members of Harkat ul-Ansar might have carried out the attack to avenge the conviction last week in Fairfax County, Virginia, of Mir Aimal Kasi, a Pakistani charged with the 1993 killings of two CIA employees. The travel advisory also cited the conviction in New York, also last week, of Ramzi Ahmed Yousef — extradited from Pakistan in 1995 — in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.

Both convictions, the State Department warned, "make Americans potential targets of retaliatory acts by their sympathizers." About two dozen American businessmen checked out of luxury hotels in Karachi. Some had gone to Pakistan's largest city to participate in an investment seminar, which the sponsor, Merrill Lynch, canceled after the shooting.

The embassy warned Americans in Karachi to stay indoors. Peter Claussen, an embassy spokesman, said about 2,000 Americans live in Pakistan, concentrated in Karachi, Lahore and other large cities.

In his telephone call to Clinton, Sharif condemned the Karachi killings as an act of terrorism and vowed his government "will spare no efforts to track down the culprits," according to an account of the conversation released by a Pakistan government spokesman. Sharif also expressed "the heartfelt sympathies and condolences of the people and government of Pakistan" and asked Clinton to convey those sentiments to the families of the four slain Americans.

Sharif dispatched Interior Minister Choudry Shujat Hussain to Karachi to convene a meeting of top security officials, including the directors of civilian and military intelligence agencies. Law enforcement sources said that Hussain pressured the officials to show progress in the investigation into the killings before the arrival last Sunday of Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright on the first working visit by a U.S. secretary of state since 1983.

The schedule of her visit to Islamabad and the North West Frontier Province has not been changed since the ambush in Karachi.

This year has seen a resurgence of sectarian violence in Karachi, raising religious sentiments of majority Sunni and minority Shiite communities. In his meeting with security officials, interior minister Hussain acknowledged that heightened religious sensitivities make it difficult for the government to crack down on fundamentalist Islamic groups, law enforcement sources said.

In 1992, the Bush administration threatened to declare Pakistan a terrorist state for aiding separatist militants in the part of Kashmir controlled by India. The threat was withdrawn a year later.

High-Tech Alliance Takes on Microsoft

Elizabeth Corcoran

MICROSOFT CORP. is facing an unusual alliance of five powerful companies that are working together on new technology that could topple the software giant from its perch atop the high-tech world.

The five competitors — International Business Machines Corp., Netscape Communications Corp., Novell Corp., Oracle Corp., and Sun Microsystems Corp. — have been driven together by two forces: a cold fear of Microsoft's continued hegemony and a shared vision of a new Internet-based "platform" that would be open to all.

The collaboration has gone on quietly for months but is surfacing now, at a time when Microsoft's business practices are coming under attack from both the Department of Justice and longtime consumer advocate Ralph Nader. The government last month charged that Microsoft is using the dominance of its Windows software to boost its share of the market for Internet-browsing software. And last week Nader led a two-day conference in which competitors and critics railed about Microsoft's business practices.

The unusual alliance of five companies, working together to combat what they view as a dominant rival, might once have raised antitrust issues of its own, according to lawyers familiar with the industry.

"Every time you get competitors together in a room, it makes antitrust lawyers very, very nervous," said Mark A. Lemley, a professor at the University of Texas School of Law in Austin. But, he said, "there's an increasing recognition in antitrust scholarship and law that sometimes cooperative arrangements among competitors is a good thing."

The vision shared by Microsoft's challengers is simple: The new cornerstone of the information age should be the Internet, which is essentially a collection of standards owned by no single company. The old stand-alone PC, with its Microsoft software and Intel chips, should gradually give way to newer, cheaper alternatives connected to the Net.

To make this happen, the executives are throwing their efforts into three new areas of technology — a computer language known as Java, which was developed by Sun for writing software that can be transmitted easily on networks and run on any computing device; a low-cost kind of computer known as an "NC," or network computer, being pushed by Oracle and other companies; and a programming technique known as "Corba" for building Lego-like blocks of software.

Microsoft's chairman Bill Gates said that, by working together, his competitors "end up creating a fairly powerful message that we have to be aware of. That's an intense competition at a level beyond what we've seen in the past," he said at his company's annual shareholder meeting last week.

Executives at the five companies say that their engineers are working together on specific projects in a way that has never occurred before. The issues are "extremely specific and are supported by an emotional and technical agreement at the executive level," said Eric Schmidt, chief executive of Novell.

Even so, there's no guarantee that such an unusual partnership will succeed. For starters, past efforts to build an open platform have failed to capture the market. An open operating system called "UNIX," while common in large, powerful workstations, splintered into many different versions and thus lacked Microsoft's market power.

The five companies in the partnership must also contend with Microsoft's own plans for the future. Microsoft has pumped tremendous energy — $2 billion and hundreds of thousands of programmers' hours — into making its Windows family of operating systems the very best platforms for building applications.

Microsoft wants to extend that dominance into the 21st century, with new Windows products that embrace new technologies.

The rival companies say they're eager for all comers to use their new, Internet-based platform — even Microsoft.

"We've invited Microsoft to participate in everything we've done, but by and large they've declined," said Jon Kannegaard, a vice president at Java Soft, a division of Sun. "They don't share the vision. What can I tell you? We're not ganging up on Microsoft — they've chosen not to come to the party."

Clinton, Gore Questioned on Fund-Raising

John F. Harris and Roberto Suro

PRESIDENT CLINTON and Vice President Gore gave separate interviews last week to Justice Department officials probing whether either man may have broken the law by making telephone fund-raising solicitations from the White House.

The interviews, which were confirmed by the White House, lasted more than two hours, sources said. The interrogators, who included FBI investigators and Justice Department attorneys, are participating in Attorney General Janet Reno's review of whether the phone calls both men made to political contributors from the White House merit the appointment of an independent counsel.

Reno is to complete a preliminary investigation of this by December 2, and private attorneys for Clinton and Gore have been trying to convince the Justice Department that a 19th century law barring campaign fund-raising on federal property does not cover telephone solicitations.

Gore has acknowledged making at least 46 explicit appeals for money on behalf of the Democratic National Committee from his White House office during 1995 and 1996. Clinton has said he has no recollection of making such appeals during the last election but does not rule out that he may have. Records show he phoned six donors from the White House residence at the request of the DNC in October 1994.

According to sources familiar with deliberations at the Justice Department and on the Clinton-Gore defense teams, the interviews broke little if any ground on basic factual matters. The questions, sources said, concerned calls that had already been disclosed by Clinton and Gore.

This apparently leaves Reno facing less a factual question than one of legal analysis: Should Clinton and Gore be prosecuted for making fund-raising calls from federal property when such calls have never been judged illegal before?

Both interviews last week were focused narrowly on the phone calls, sources said, and did not explore other avenues of the Democratic fund-raising controversy, such as what either Clinton or Gore knew about illegal foreign contributions to the DNC, or what role they played in directing the party's "soft money" spending last year.

These questions are under investigation by the Justice Department. Reno announced last month that she has seen no evidence on these controversies to justify triggering the independent counsel process.

The president has been questioned by investigators in the past for the Whitewater affair, but it was the first time the vice president has undergone such questioning.

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Jury Selection Begins in Unabomber Trial

William Booth in Sacramento

THE MOST enduring public images of Theodore Kaczynski from the time of his arrest were of a bedraggled, muddy wildman, snatched from his hermit's shack in the Montana mountains, and then dragged blinking past a phalanx of TV cameras to his arraignment. After eluding authorities in the most extensive and expensive manhunt in FBI history, he was charged as the Unabomber, the anti-technology terrorist whose bombs killed three people and maimed two dozen more.

Last week, as he marched stiffly into a packed federal courtroom here on the first day of his trial, Kaczynski, 55, no longer was the shaggy-haired hermit. Instead, he appeared to resemble a former self, looking like the awkward mathematics instructor he was at Berkeley, before he resigned without explanation in 1969 to live alone in a cabin he built himself.

He strode briskly to the defense table, wearing a muted gray sports jacket, black pants and white open shirt, with his salt-and-pepper hair neatly parted and his beard trimmed. With his rough hands at his sides, Kaczynski sat attentively throughout the day's proceedings, occasionally talking with his attorneys, or scribbling notes on a large yellow legal pad.

From the defense table, Kaczynski faced not only U.S. District Judge Garland E. Burrell, but the very tools of technology that the alleged Unabomber railed against in his famous 35,000-word manifesto — computers.

On the raised dais, the court's clerk and stenographer sat, almost hidden behind their computer screens. Two FBI agents at the prosecution's table also possessed the implements that the Unabomber



Kaczynski: his lawyers are faced with a mountain of damning evidence

believed has created a dehumanized society of drones.

"The technophiles are taking us all on an utterly reckless ride into the unknown," the Unabomber wrote in his famous manifesto. "It would be better to dump the whole stinking system and take the consequences."

Though the government seeks to prove that Kaczynski is the elusive Unabomber, who over a period of 18 years beginning in 1978 mailed or placed 16 bombs that killed three victims and injured another 29 persons, he is charged in this trial with four bombings between 1985 and 1995, which resulted in two serious maimings and two deaths, which both occurred in Sacramento.

Kaczynski faced the first few potential jurors, selected randomly from a pool of several hundred. One by one, the anonymous panelists, identified only by number, sat in the box and answered questions from the judge and the attorneys as the defendant faced them, his hands folded on the table.

The questions were blunt and to the business at hand: if convicted of the crimes for which he stands charged, could the jurors sentence Kaczynski to death?

Juror Number Two, a middle-aged woman, told the judge she could not. "I don't feel like I can sit here and say whether he should live or die and go on with my life," she said. "I can't do that." She was excused for cause.

Juror Number Five, an elderly retired man who volunteers as the financial secretary of his church, also had his doubts, saying he had considered the efficacy of the death penalty over the years, as a deterrent, and had concluded it serves only society's desire for revenge. "I do not believe it serves a good purpose in the judicial system," he said. But when pressed, the potential panelist said he could carry out his duty and follow the law.

Several potential jurors confessed they had read newspaper articles or watched television reports on the case, even after they were selected for the jury pool and instructed not to do so.

One possible juror admitted he thought Kaczynski seemed guilty, after reading about the trove of evidence found in his Montana cabin — including drafts of the manifesto and unexploded signature explosives. This man was also excused, because of a medical condition and the prospect of a long daily, difficult commute to the courtroom.

Jury selection is expected to take several weeks, but the process is of vital importance, particularly for the defense. Faced with a mountain of damning evidence — journals written by Kaczynski that read like virtual signed confessions — his attorneys are likely focusing on the possible punishment phase. In court documents, they have suggested they will argue that their client suffers from a mental illness, perhaps paranoid schizophrenia, and therefore does not deserve to die.

The courtroom is only a few miles from where the alleged Unabomber's two Sacramento victims were killed. One was Hugh C. Scrutton, a computer merchant who died outside his store.

The other victim was Gilbert B. Murray, a forester and timber lobbyist, who was killed in his office at the California Forestry Association in June 1995 by a pipe bomb hidden inside a wooden box. The pipe had been intentionally scored to make it more lethal, to splinter into a deadly shrapnel.

Murray's wife, Connie, was in court, but she declined to speak with reporters. She was consoled by Mark O'Sullivan, a chaplain from the FBI.

"This woman does not have a hateful bone in her body," said O'Sullivan, standing before the TV cameras. He said he did not know Connie Murray's thoughts on the death penalty. She came to court, O'Sullivan said, because she did not want her slain husband to be lost in the process.

Yeltsin Fires Two More Chubais Men

David Hoffman in Yekaterinburg

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin fired two more top aides to Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais last weekend but refused to accept Chubais's resignation, leaving Russia's leading economic reformer still in office but dealing a major setback to the prospects for further liberalization of Russia's economy.

Chubais survived because Russia's economy already is fragile, its capital markets severely weakened by recent global economic turmoil, analysts said. The Interfax news agency quoted a Kremlin official as saying that Chubais was not dismissed because of "an extremely critical social and economic situation in Russia."

But the dismissal of two of his top aides, coupled with two key sackings earlier, raised questions about how effective Chubais will be in the future. "It's very bad," said Alexander Oslon, a pollster who has worked closely with Chubais. "Even if Chubais stays, it will be a different Chubais. It will be a Chubais without a team, a weaker Chubais. This Chubais will be less capable of achieving his goals."

Yeltsin sacked the federal privatization chief, Maxim Boiko, and the head of Russia's bankruptcy commission, Pyotr Mostovoi, both close Chubais allies. A day earlier, he dumped Alexander Kazakov, a Chubais lieutenant who was deputy Kremlin chief of staff. In August, Alfred Kokh, then privatization boss, also was forced out.

The firings followed disclosure last week that Chubais and several co-authors — including Boiko, Mostovoi and Kazakov — had received payments of $90,000 each for a book on the history of Russia's massive privatization of state assets. Chubais acknowledged the payment was large and said most of the money was to be donated to a foundation overseen by Yegor Gaidar, a former prime minister and fellow free-market reformer. But the uproar grew more intense because the source of the payments appears to be one of the most influential and wealthy of the Russian tycoons who have been feuding with each other and Chubais in recent months.

Chubais is one of the few real survivors of the rough-and-tumble of Russian domestic politics. He has served almost continuously in Yeltsin's governments since the new Russian state was born in 1992 out of the Soviet collapse. He was fired in early 1996, then brought back a few months later as a result of a strong push by some politically well-connected business magnates.

Since March, he and Boris Nemtsov, both first deputy prime ministers, have taken the lead on Russian economic and domestic policy and have often been described, inside and outside Russia, as running the most reform-minded government since Gaidar's in 1992. Now, hopes that Chubais and Nemtsov could score major gains in their drive to reshape Russia's economy have been dimmed, at best.

Although Chubais has long been unpopular in the eyes of the public, he remained strong inside government because of his skills as a bureaucratic infighter.

Poll Surprise In S.Korea

MILITARY dictators of South Korea's past have plotted to kill opposition politician Kim Dae Jung in various ways. But Kim, 73, still hobbling from one of those attempts on his life, limped to the stage with his two new political partners last week amid thunderous applause from nearly 5,000 spectators, *writes Kevin Sullivan in Seoul.*

South Korean politics is extremely unpredictable and anything could happen between now and the December 18 presidential election. But the most recent polls show Kim is the choice of up to 38 percent of voters, as much as 12 points ahead of the other candidates in the three-way field: former provincial governor Rhee In Je, who has formed his own party after leaving the ruling party, and former Supreme Court justice Lee Hoi Chang, the ruling party candidate.

If his lead holds up Kim would be the first opposition candidate to wrest the presidency from the ruling party in more than 35 years. In the past, ruling party candidates were virtually guaranteed to win — if more by force than by popular mandate. But just over a month before the election, the opposition leader and the renegade who bolted the ruling party are running first and second in the polls.

Congress Changes Immigration Law

William Branigin and Pamela Constable

A YEAR after passing a tough immigration law, Congress has approved far-reaching changes that make it easier for more than a million illegal immigrants to remain in the United States but that close a major loophole for newcomers who enter illegally in the future.

The measures, part of end-of-session deals reached last week, effectively head off deportation for an estimated 400,000 Central Americans and allow at least 1 million other illegal immigrants to remain in the United States while seeking permanent legal status, provided they pay a $1,000 fine and are otherwise eligible. The provisions were included in two appropriations bills that were passed by Congress.

Another separate measure, part of a government funding package, gives the Immigration and Naturalization Service money to revamp its citizenship process, which came under heavy criticism last year after 180,000 immigrants were naturalized without proper criminal background checks.

The changes to immigration law appeared to reflect a desire by Republican leaders in Congress to improve their party's image with a fast-growing segment of the electorate: newly naturalized immigrants.

While easing the impact of last year's law in some respects, Congress also wrote an end to a controversial 1994 provision that so far has allowed 600,000 eligible illegal immigrants to pay a fine in an effort to become legal while remaining in the United States. Without this provision, illegal immigrants in the country would have to return home to get their visas at U.S. consulates abroad.

The provision, known as 245(i), remains in effect for illegal immigrants for whom family members or employers here have filed visa petitions or labor certifications — the first step in an often lengthy legalization process — by January 14, 1998. According to congressional staff members, this "grandfather clause" will allow at least 1 million more foreigners, who have already entered the country illegally or overstayed their visas, to apply for "green cards" under the old law once their eligibility numbers come up. However, this option will be closed for future illegal immigrants, who will have to return to their homelands to await their green cards, or risk being barred from getting any U.S. visa for three to 10 years if they remain in the country illegally for more than six months.

The compromise came under sharp criticism from pro-immigration and business groups, which had lobbied intensively for a permanent extension of the measure. Groups that favor reducing immigration levels welcomed the end of the provision, but lamented the deal for allowing hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants to keep using the loophole for years to come.

The deal grants amnesty to as many as 150,000 Nicaraguans and 5,000 Cubans who arrived in the United States by December 1, 1995. An estimated 200,000 Salvadorans, 50,000 Guatemalans and several thousand East Europeans benefit, but to a lesser degree. They are allowed to apply for "suspension of deportation" under the more lenient rules of the pre-1996 immigration law, and will be presumed to have met the toughest requirement: a showing of "extreme hardship." This means that most are likely to get their green cards eventually, congressional sources said.

Despite strong lobbying by the Congressional Black Caucus, Haitians were not included in the deal.

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Corruption Spills Across the Border

William Branigin and John Ward Anderson

A BORDER PATROL agent in Douglas, Arizona, is convicted on drug-trafficking charges for his role in guiding across the border a vehicle loaded with more than a half-ton of cocaine.

In Laredo, Texas, two sheriff's officers are arrested for stealing more than a ton of marijuana from police custody and selling it back to drug dealers.

In Calexico, California, four current or former customs and immigration inspectors are jailed for their part in two rings that smuggled more than 11 tons of cocaine, worth at least $165 million, into the United States over five years.

With increasing frequency along the 2,000-mile frontier between the United States and Mexico — a region of remote desert and hard-baked farmland, with a few booming cities and a generations-long tradition of smuggling — U.S. officers entrusted with defending the border have been caught surrendering it to drug traffickers.

These federal, state and local officials have been recruited by Mexican trafficking groups that for years have relied on corruption as their favored method for doing business south of the border. They are offered huge bribes and profits, and run little risk of getting caught. Authorities have had their greatest successes in discovering corruption through sheer luck — leading them to conclude that much is going undetected.

"Unfortunately, both the violence and the corruption that are attendant to the drug trade in Mexico are spilling across the border into the United States," Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) chief Thomas A Constantine said in recent Senate testimony. "These criminals will not hesitate to offer U.S. law enforcement officers millions of dollars to look the other way or provide them with information."

Many senior U.S. officials say that the problem of corruption on the American side of the border is limited to "a few bad apples," to cite a commonly used phrase. They say there is no proof that drug corruption in the United States is widespread or systemic, with entire border crossings or units or agencies conspiring in illegal activities. That level of graft, they say, still is confined to Mexico, where bribes are often kicked rung by rung up the ladder to the highest reaches of government, with every official along the way taking a cut.

But anecdotal evidence suggests that the problem in the United States is more extensive than generally acknowledged, particularly in local police agencies along the border. There appears to be no coordinated federal response to border corruption, however, and detecting these crimes is often a matter of chance.

Meanwhile, according to estimates based on official figures, five to seven tons of illegal drugs are smuggled across the border every day. "These quantities of coke and marijuana just couldn't be moved across the border if there wasn't some sort of a problem with law enforcement and detection," said Michael F. McCormick, head of the U.S. attorney's office in McAllen, Texas. "You just have to read between the lines."

Echoing that theme, a senior Mexican anti-drug official said: "How am I supposed to believe that there's no corruption in [U.S. law enforcement] when there are rivers of drugs and money corrupting it? It defies common sense."

According to a drug smuggler from Texas who said he worked for a major Mexican kingpin for about four years, every significant shipment he was involved in was protected by Mexican federal police — and, he was told, crossed into the United States at a border checkpoint with help from U.S. officials who had been bribed.

"They [U.S. officials] give you a time, and you tell them the vehicle, and it's money in their pockets, without taxes," he said. "If you were working for immigration and I told you, 'We're going to cross 500 kilos and we'll give you $50,000 now and $50,000 after it's across,' would you take it or not? It's something to think about. Nobody makes $100,000 in a day."

Officials cite various factors that contribute to corruption, including low morale among many law



U.S. customs agents spot-check cars from Mexico at the San Ysidro, California, border crossing PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL WILLIAMSON

enforcement workers: sophisticated surveillance by drug mafias to identify the personal vulnerabilities of front-line inspectors; possible intimidation of border guards and their families; the cross-border family ties that some border guards have; and the difficulty of detecting corruption, much less proving it in court. But in the end, officials said, greed is the strongest motive for local police officers who make as little as $15,000 a year and federal border agents who start at about $25,000.

The various federal agencies charged with stopping drugs at the border have begun sniping at one another — although few officials are willing to attach their names to their complaints — over how well they are policing themselves against corruption. Some of the bitter grousing has ethnic overtones.

"The Customs and Border Patrol recruit along the [Rio Grande] river, and many are great kids," said a high-ranking anti-drug official in Texas who asked not to be identified. "The fatal mistake is sending them right back to their home town, because a percentage have family ties to people who are corrupt. When a brother-in-law comes through his lane, what's he going to do — search him? They wave him through. Some are corrupt, and some are unknowingly corrupted. They are manipulated."

Many border officials said they find such suspicious insulting and demeaning to Hispanics, who account for as much as 90 percent of the population in some border counties. In fact, they say, people hired locally often are better at detecting smugglers.

"I think it's an insult to insinuate [local] people are susceptible to corruption," said Ramon Juarez, the Laredo port director for the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). "The inspectors who are most successful at detecting violators are from here. They know the people, the culture, the area. They have a sixth sense about what's going on.

"When I have seen corruption, it's because the system allowed it ... The guys trying to get things across are desperate . . . They'll study us and identify our weak links, and you'll never know why someone is going to be corrupted. But it doesn't mean everybody is corrupt."

Officials say that vulnerable federal employees — for instance, people who are over their heads in debt — are particularly susceptible to the bribes offered by drug dealers. An effort is now being made, however, to submit inspectors to more frequent and thorough checks, including reviews of their personal finances.

In a September 1995 review of the Border Patrol, the Justice Department's Office of the Inspector General "found that one-third of the Border Patrol was overdue for re-investigation," according to Senate testimony last May by Michael R. Bromwich, head of the office.

Thorough background checks and periodic monitoring are particularly important given the rapid hiring of federal law enforcement personnel in recent years along the border, officials said. Since 1992, the Border Patrol and its parent agency, the INS, have increased their border staffing by more than 80 percent, from 5,863 employees to 10,746 this year.

Many law enforcement and corruption experts propose a regular rotation of personnel — which severs potentially corrupting cross-border ties — along with regular polygraph examinations.

Many Customs and immigration officials strenuously oppose rotation as too disruptive of agents' personal lives, however, and the Customs employees' union also opposes such a policy. Moreover, it is particularly difficult to recruit people from other parts of the United States to work in the impoverished border area, officials said, adding that border communities offer the biggest pool of bilingual workers.

Corruption is not restricted to those who guard the borders. Local law enforcement officials can use their police authority to help smugglers move their loads.

"We clearly have seen corruption of sheriffs, customs department inspectors and others," White House drug policy director Barry R. McCaffrey said during a recent tour of the Southwest border. "The question isn't whether there'll be corruption. The question is, what are we going to do about it?"

Experts Weigh Impact of TV on Trials

Joan Biskupic

IT WAS trial as sport, with play-by-play commentators, televised outbursts from waiting crowds and, in the English au pair's home town, images of champagne corks flying as the judge threw out the jury's murder verdict, changed it to manslaughter and set Louise Woodward free.

Like the O.J. Simpson case two years earlier, the trial in the death of a Massachusetts infant drew millions of people to their television sets and evoked an outpouring of public opinion on whether justice was served.

But as the public has become intoxicated with big trials, legal experts are focusing on a central question: Can public passion taint a justice system that is intended to be impartial?

Trials are supposed to reflect the sentiments of the community — a state brings charges on behalf of "the people" and a jury is made up of one's peers — but what happens when public involvement turns into public influence? Does the public sentiment captured by pollsters, talk radio hosts and TV commentators ever sway a judge? If that happens, are the interests of justice served?

In reducing Woodward's sentence last week, Judge Hiller B. Zobel himself raised the issue by acknowledging that the public eye was upon him. "Judges must follow their oaths and do their duty, heedless of editorials, letters, telegrams, picketers, threats, petitions, panelists, and talk shows," he said. "In this country, we do not administer justice by plebiscite."

Few are suggesting that Zobel bowed to popular opinion, but the intense media coverage and public attention cannot help but raise the specter that in high-profile cases like Woodward's, judges feel the same pressure that any human being would.

"This isn't an election or a popularity contest," said Nancy Luque, a former federal prosecutor and now defense lawyer in the District of Columbia. "While I think that the judge is right, that 'justice' has to prevail, I'm not always sure it can when the lobbying is so intense and so publicized."

The intense public interest in trials today is often driven by televised coverage and fed by media polls that, some argue, lead people to believe what they think matters, or at least ought to.

Before Zobel reduced Woodward's murder conviction, more than 90 percent of the people polled in Massachusetts said they thought it should be cut or wiped out.

When the police officers accused of beating fleeing Los Angeles motorist Rodney G. King were acquitted in 1992 and riots broke out, the federal government immediately charged the police under civil rights law and won convictions against two of the officers. After O.J. Simpson was acquitted in a criminal trial, a majority of whites said they thought the jury verdict was wrong. In the civil trial that followed, a predominantly white jury found Simpson liable in the deaths of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald L. Goldman.

Still, the effect of publicity on a trial is not altogether a new phenomenon. In one of the most infamous episodes of a tainted proceeding, the Supreme Court overturned the murder conviction of Sam Sheppard, an osteopath accused of bludgeoning to death his pregnant wife in 1954. The justices said that pretrial news reports had practically declared Sheppard guilty and that "bedlam reigned at the courthouse."

Today, with cameras in the courtroom and programs such as CNN's Burden of Proof, public interest in provocative trials has only increased. To Burden of Proof co-host Greta Van Susteren, that's a good thing, if it means people learn about the justice system. But she expressed concern that people who have watched only snippets think they know the truth of a case.

"The only thing that scares me about trials is polls," she said last week. "You are asking people who didn't watch the trial who should win. That is extremely troubling."

Spies Who Gave Away 'Fat Man's' Secrets

Gregg Herken

BOMBSHELL
The Secret Story of America's Unknown Atomic Spy Conspiracy
By Joseph Albright and Marcia Kunstel
Times Books. 399 pp. $25.

WHEN THE Soviet Union imploded in 1989, the opening of KGB archives cast a brief but intense light on the question of how much the Russians learned through espionage about America's wartime atomic-bomb project. Regrettably, the archives have since closed up again, amid an ongoing turf war between Russian scientists and former spies over who deserves credit for breaking the U.S. nuclear monopoly. Recently, the U.S. National Security Agency shed more light on the subject when it declassified some 2,900 wartime messages sent by the Soviets between the United States and Moscow. The coded cables were intercepted and subsequently decrypted under an ultra-secret NSA project known as Venona.

Joseph Albright and Marcia Kunstel — two correspondents for the Cox Newspapers who were formerly based in Moscow — have written the first book on Soviet atomic espionage to draw upon Russian archival sources as well as Venona. It is both a solid, well-researched work of history and a brilliant piece of reportage.

The authors' story revolves around two young American spies, Theodore Hall and Saville Sax, and a husband-and-wife team from New York named Morris and Lona Cohen who passed atomic secrets to Soviet handlers and thence to Moscow Center. Unlike modern-day traitors such as Aldrich Ames, who spied for money, Hall, Sax and the Cohens did what they did out of love of country. Unfortunately, the country was the Soviet Union — a place they had never seen. Like Britain's notorious "Cambridge Comintern," whose members included famed spies Donald Maclean and Kim Philby, Hall and Sax made the decision to become spies while they were still in college (they roomed together at Harvard). Although little has been known about them until now, Hall, Sax and the Cohens — a spy ring known to the Russians as the "Volunteers" — may actually have done more damage.

As a 19-year-old physicist at Los Alamos, Hall passed the Russians a detailed description of the "Fat Man" plutonium bomb — the type that the United States tested in New Mexico and later dropped on Nagasaki. The Soviets copied Fat Man and tested it four years later, in an explosion that stunned the West. Until now, this piece of treachery has been blamed on Klaus Fuchs, the German-born spy who worked for the British Mission at Los Alamos. Bombshell provides convincing evidence that Fuchs only confirmed information the Russians already had from Hall, and thus that the first act of treason and its perpetrator were homegrown.

The authors' careful sleuthing leaves little doubt that Hall and Sax are the agents identified in Venona cables by the codenames "Mlad" ("Young") and "Star" ("Old"). (Ironically, their cover was blown as early as 1944, when the Soviets sent a message containing the names Hall and Sax and details of their recruitment.)

But as even Albright and Kunstel acknowledge, enough gaps and inconsistencies exist in the Soviet record and Venona to suggest that Hall may not have been the only source for the secrets that Lona Cohen, codenamed "Helen," couriered from Los Alamos to the Russians. In an interview earlier this year, Hall himself expressed doubt that he was Lona's only or even most important informant. Indeed, at least two agents who appear in earlier Venona cables as sources of atomic secrets — "Kvant" ("Quantum") and "Pers" ("Persian") — remain unidentified to this day. The names of two other "Volunteers" subsequently recruited by Hall — "Anta" and "Aden" — are likewise unknown, as is the identity of another pair of agents whom the Cohens recruited. One marvels, at the end of this book, not that the Russians were able to steal America's atomic secrets but that there were any secrets left to steal.

Like the Nazis' Enigma code, Venona was too valuable a Cold War secret to risk compromising by prosecuting the Volunteers (even though NSA suspected that the Russians knew about its cryptanalytic breakthrough from Kim Philby and a mole within the agency). Yet there is either more to the story than Albright and Kunstel have been able to uncover, or American counter-intelligence was even less competent than previously thought. Despite what they knew about Hall and Sax, the FBI removed both from its active "watch list" in early 1952. Six months later, Hall was back in the spying business. In 1947, the authors claim, Hall may have been the source of information that helped the Russians build their hydrogen bomb.

ONE U.S. document that Albright and Kunstel do not cite shows that, as late as 1954, one of Hall's colleagues at wartime Los Alamos warned the congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy that Hall was possibly the "second Fuchs" the committee was seeking. A year earlier, a Joint Committee staffer had sparked a security investigation of Robert Oppenheimer by accusing the physicist of being "more probably than not" a Soviet agent. Bombshell provides new information about the whole hunt for "Red atom spies" that dominated much of this country's political life in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The same is true for the trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were executed in 1953 for what FBI director J. Edgar Hoover famously called the "cri[me] of the century." It now appears th[at] the Rosenbergs were only bit pl[ay]ers in the theft of atomic secrets.

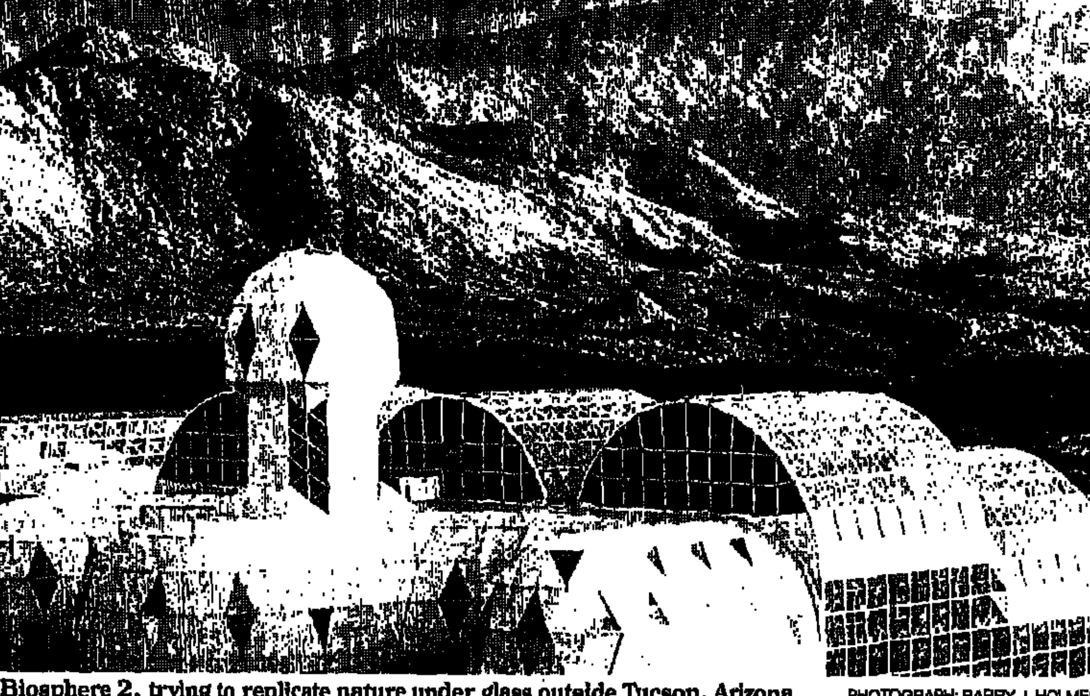
The denouement to this story is also stranger than fiction. Af[ter] drifting from job to job, Saville Sa[x] finally wound up teaching "valu[es] clarification" in a Great Socie[ty]-funded education program cal[led] NEXTEP. ("Get in touch with you[r] love feelings," he wrote in a manu[al] on mediation.) Sax's boast to frien[ds] that he had given the atomic bo[mb] to the Russians was universally ig[]nored to the end of his life in 19[]. The Cohens ultimately betrayed n[ot] one country but two. Fleeing th[e] United States, they changed the[ir] names and lived seemingly qui[et] lives as antiquarian book dealers i[n] a London suburb — from whi[ch] they passed British defense secre[ts] to the Russians until being caught [in] 1961. Eventually traded to the So[vi]ets in a spy swap, Morris and L[ona] spent their last days in Mosco[w] under virtual house arrest by th[e] KGB they had so diligently served.

Ted Hall also moved to Engl[and] with his family in the early 19[60s] and subsequently made a name [for] himself in an entirely different sc[i]entific field, biological microanal[y]sis. His last contact with So[viet] intelligence was in 1953. Now [] and ailing from Parkinson's dis[ease] and inoperable cancer, Hall ga[ve] the authors a two-page statement [in] a "mistakes were made" vein. Ha[ll's] letter acknowledges Soviet bru[tal]ities but leaves little doubt that [he] remains, like the Cohens, unrep[en]tant: "I am no longer that pers[on] but I am by no means ashamed [of] him."

Yarns From The Dry Southwest

T. H. Watkins

LEGENDS OF THE AMERICAN DESERT
Sojourns in the Greater Southwest
By Alex Shoumatoff
Knopf. 534pp. $30



Biosphere 2, trying to replicate nature under glass outside Tucson, Arizona PHOTOGRAPH: BARRY J. HOLMES

THIS AMIABLE shambles of a book, at once irritating and fascinating, confusing and enlightening, defies rational description. Someone once said that some books are not so much finished as abandoned. So it was with Legends Of The American Desert, as Shoumatoff admits in the "acknowledgments" section at the end of the book — though the reader might wish that he had done so in a preface, so as to learn early on that this odd mosaic of history, reportage, speculation, personal memoir, mythology and travelogue does not always pay much attention to common notions of structure, theme, chronology or even tense. "This book has gone through several incarnations and has been the beneficiary of extensive editorial direction since its inception in 1985," Shoumatoff says. "Hard as I've tried, it is not really a cohesive, sustained performance . . . [N]ot having the will to put in another ten years trying to get it right, I've reconciled myself to what it is." In spite of its manifold flaws I found Legends Of The American Desert to be almost addictive, mainly because of the irresistible stories Shoumatoff — the author of nine other well-received books, including The World Is Burning, about the death of Brazilian rainforest advocate Chico Mendes — has uncovered in his almost obsessive quest to understand the region. As he interprets it, the Southwest may hold more of what is good, evil, true, false, hilarious or simply deranged in the human narrative than any other section of the United States.

This 'sunstruck' place of light, color and hard-edged beauty, he emphasizes, has always attracted a multiplicity of folk, from the Anasazi and other ancient peoples trying to establish a sustainable life in a land governed by aridity, to the Spanish invaders of the 15th and 16th centuries trying to pin down a continental empire; from the raucous "mountain men" who caroused profanely in Taos in the 1830s, to the "lungers" who flocked to the dry desert air to escape the white plague of tuberculosis in the 1880s. Whatever brought them here, individually and collectively such pilgrims left the land with an incomparable inheritance of stories.

Shoumatoff mines this treasure frenetically, paying appropriate attention to the early history, and some of his best writing can be found in the chronicle of how Indian, Hispanic and Anglo cultures clashed and mingled over a period of more than 300 years. But he is a pilgrim, too, and he reserves the bulk of his discussion for the period from about 1970, when he first encountered the Southwest, to the present. Layering personal memory and experience with journalistic excursions and historical digressions, he produces a sometimes phantasmagoric portrait of a region through which individual lives (including his own) circulate randomly, like particles in liquid suspension: Indian traditionalists and Chicano activists, legal and illegal immigrants, writers, artists, poets, druggies, New Age utopians, and real estate entrepreneurs — as well as corporate miners, drillers, loggers, grazers and farmers and the bureaucrats and politicians who parrot their philosophies and service their needs.

Here is the story of the hapless half-Navajo, half-Winnebago Marine Clayton Lonetree, who was seduced by a Soviet spy and spent more than nine years in prison. Here is the rise and fall of Biosphere 2, the controversial, somewhat ludicrous atte[mpt] to replicate nature under glass o[ut]side Tucson. Here are water fig[hts] that validate the folk tale that no[vel]ist John Nichols tells in The Mil[agro] Beanfield War. Here is Leroy Ja[ck]son, a Navajo environmental[ist] found dead in his car one day, p[er]haps a suicide, perhaps not. He[re] are working cowboys living out [the] last days of the free-range cattle [in]dustry and the environmentalis[ts] who will be happy to see them [go]. Here are the quiet conversos, a s[ub]culture made up of the descenda[nts] of Mexican Jews who converted [to] Christianity to escape the Inq[uisi]tion, and the vicious traficant[es of] Chihuahua, Mexico, who fill an [ap]parently insatiable U.S. demand [for] heroin and marijuana. Here [is] Phoenix spreading to fill the h[ori]zon in spite of all logic, while L[os] Alamos tries to keep itself alive [in a] world that has decided that nucl[ear] weapons are not necessarily ins[tru]ments of peace. Here are the H[opi,] the Navajo, the Pueblos, [the Tohono] O'odham, the Apaches, comp[lex] and sometimes contentious peop[le] who refuse to mimic Anglo expe[cta]tions of either nobility or degr[ada]tion, many of them holding on [to the] protocols of an ancient cosmolog[y].

On and on the author goes in [fits] and starts, piling story upon st[ory,] impression upon impression, [hop]ing (as he admits) that accret[ion] will somehow result in coherence[. It] doesn't, not really, but after a w[hile] it no longer seems to matter. Li[ke] the Southwest itself, Legends [Of] The Desert is not for everyone, [but] if you can bring yourself to acc[ept it] on its own idiosyncratic terms [and] weave your way through its [] tangled literary geography, it [will] enlarge your understanding of [one] of the most compellingly beau[tiful] and diverse regions on the [conti]nent and of humanity's fragile [and] slightly preposterous place in it.

South America Wary of U.S. Trade Aims

Anthony Faiola in Lima

WHEN PRESIDENT Clinton whisked through South America last month, he made free trade the crux of his agenda. He declared a new era of economic partnership with the region, insisting that he would make negotiations for a hemisphere-wide free-trading block the focus of the second Summit of the Americas, scheduled for next April.

But last week, with Clinton's failure to win from Congress what amounted to the power to negotiate trade agreements, South Americans have become markedly more skeptical of Clinton's crusade. In some countries, particularly Chile — which Clinton had promised to make the next nation to participate in a free-trade accord with the United States — business executives and government officials expressed frustration and disappointment. They said they are losing faith that such an accord will ever be concluded.

Yet in other South American nations there was indifference — and even applause from trade protectionists — over the lack of U.S. congressional support for the president's trade position. Those sentiments seemed strongest in Brazil, the region's industrial powerhouse, where the number of opponents to the extension of a NAFTA-like accord into Brazil and its important trading partners in South America is growing. Many Brazilians fear such an accord would only widen their trade deficit, which is a major factor in an economic crisis now brewing in Latin America's largest nation.

"Nobody is happier about [Clinton's failure] than the protectionists in Brazil," said Marcus Nunes, a partner in a Sao Paulo-based economic research group.

The issue centers on Clinton's inability to win support for a piece of legislation — known as "fast-track" trade negotiation — which essentially gives the President the power to conclude trade agreements with foreign nations. With such authority, Congress can only vote yes or no on trade accords, without tinkering with the language. South American nations, whose leaders already have such authority, have said they will not sign free-trade agreements with the United States unless the White House has fast-track capability.

During his trip to South America, Clinton pushed the topic hard, calling on leaders to head into serious negotiations to create a hemisphere-wide free-trading block by 2005 — something that had been agreed on in theory at the first Americas' summit in Miami in 1994.

But last week it appeared to many in South America that Clinton came here promising more than he could deliver. Some analysts contended the fast-track setback may mean an end to Clinton's vision for a Free Trade Association of the Americas, and, at the very least, put the idea on the "slow track" for the time being.

"I think it puts America at a major disadvantage in negotiating trade agreements in the future," said Johannes Heirman, an economist at the United Nation's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago, the Chilean capital. "There is a lack of confidence now — an enormous disillusion."

That, however, doesn't mean that the idea of increased U.S. trade with Latin America should be buried, experts say. The United States will not need the special authority Clinton is seeking from Congress to win smaller trade concessions — many of which have helped boost U.S. exports to Latin America to $52 billion in 1996, double the figure of 1990.

"The U.S. is such a huge economy that once the idea of [wider] trade treaties with the United States dissipates in South America, I think you'll find many smaller and creative agreements that will still mean increases in trade between the two regions," said Arturo Valenzuela, executive director of the Center for Latin American Studies at Washington's Georgetown University.

For now, however, that is little consolation to Chile, a country of 14 million that has eagerly awaited a promised free-trade agreement with the United States for the past three years. A special U.S. trading relationship with Chile was considered a way of noting the advances the nation has made toward a thriving free-market economy in the 1990s.

Clinton's troubles also strain economic and political ties with Chile at a time when it has been angered by Washington's decision to grant its neighbor, Argentina, a special strategic "non-NATO" ally status with the United States.

"In the eyes of the [Chilean public], it is another disappointment," Chilean Foreign Minister Jose Miguel Insulza said. "Our expectations were much higher . . . We now see free trade with the U.S. as a more remote possibility."

At the same time, larger developing countries in the region have grown more skeptical of free trade, arguing that dropping barriers may end up hurting, rather than boosting, their national economies. Brazilians, who are now grappling with cracks in the "economic miracle" that have sent shock waves through the nation's stock markets and investor community, have insisted from the beginning that negotiation of any free-trade agreement must move slowly — certainly more slowly than Clinton and United States trade officials have asked.

Free-trade opponents have argued that Brazil still needs time for its legislature to enact tax reforms and for its domestic industries to downsize and become more efficient. Both measures are necessary, they say, if the Brazilians are to compete effectively against their leaner U.S. counterparts.

Many South Americans also continue to fear that the hemisphere-wide free-trading block envisioned by Clinton would undercut the trading bloc known as Mercosur, a sort of European Union in South America, which Brazil now dominates. Mercosur also includes Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.

"It's a myth that all of South America is eager to jump onto the idea of free trade," Valenzuela said. "It's also a myth that free trade is the only way to develop increased economic ties."

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
November 23 1997

The world can stop children having to work for a living, but we need to act wisely — and now. **Jonathan Steele** reports

Child labour, child danger

WHEN THE United States senator Tom Harkin introduced a Child Labour Deterrence Bill to block imports into the US of any products made by children there was widespread applause. In Bangladesh the bill had an electric effect. Scores of garment manufacturers promptly sacked their child workers, leaving many of them to eke out a living in even worse conditions.

Twelve-year-old Delwar Hossain used to spend 12 hours a day pressing shirts and packing them for export. It was a tough life, and he has a patch of melted skin on his arm from an industrial accident when he was burned by an iron. But without his factory job, he had to earn money by selling waste paper that he scavenged in the street. He lived with his mentally-ill mother and was the only bread-winner. Some of the girls who lost their jobs turned to prostitution.

The Harkin bill is only one example of how, in the complex world of child labour, the cure can sometimes be worse than the disease. Last month experts from Unicef, the International Labour Organisation, and scores of governments met in Oslo to analyse the growing problem.

Although damaging in its immediate effect, the Harkin case helped to galvanise the Bangladeshi government. Along with Unicef and the ILO it negotiated a deal with the garment manufacturers to give the vacated jobs to family members while the children received a government stipend to attend training schools.

Clare Short, the UK's International Development Secretary, announced a similar scheme at the Oslo conference under which Britain will give a grant to the Save the Children Fund to provide schooling and training for children trapped in football-stitching work in Pakistan.

If the Harkin approach of using blanket bans is too blunt an instrument in the absence of other measures, the alternative extreme is to argue that as long as there is poverty, there will be child labour. Short of a worldwide programme of poverty reduction, nothing else can be done.

Poverty is certainly the most powerful force driving children into work, as the United Nations Children's Fund made clear in its documents for the Oslo conference. At least 650 million children in the world are living in extreme poverty, defined as less than $1 a day. The number is rising. The gap between rich and poor is also on the increase. The latest Human Development Report found that the level of income disparity between the richest and poorest 20 per cent of the world population increased from 30:1 to 78:1 between 1960 and 1994. Child labour is also appearing in new areas of the world such as post-communist central and eastern Europe, where the number of people in poverty is going up.

But Unicef also points out that poverty does not automatically lead to child labour. Not all poor children work. It is clear, too, that child labour is not just a result but also a cause of poverty. In the short term poor families may behave from a "rational" economic point of view by putting children to work, since they need the cash.

According to the best available evidence, children in poor families sometimes contribute up to a quarter of household income. But from a longer perspective child labour begets new poverty, since working children lose out on education and the chance of better earning power when they become adults.

Economic incentives should be put in place to support or compensate families for the loss of income when children go to school rather than work. Schemes which provide small loans to women have had a powerful effect in cutting child labour. At the World Summit for Social Development two years ago donor countries agreed on the "20/20 initiative" to allocate at least 20 per cent of aid to basic social services, while recipient countries promised that these areas would get at least 20 per cent of their national budgets. Neither side has yet fulfilled the promise.

Broad programmes of this kind can provide incentives for cutting back on child labour. They may be the only ways of dealing with the enormous amount of child labour that is almost unreachable by law enforcement since it takes place in the home, in family firms, or in the fields. The ILO calculates that two thirds of working children live in rural areas. Roughly two-thirds work in family businesses.

But law and other forms of prohibition have a role to play, particularly when the employers are not family members. The ILO wants all governments to pass legislation banning labour by children under the age of 15 in line with ILO conventions. The ILO is also promoting new conventions to ban child workers under 12 and outlaw the most dangerous forms of exploitation such as bonded labour and child prostitution.

To put international pressure on individual countries, some activists favour including "social clauses" in trade agreements. These would discourage unacceptable labour practices, including the employment of children, with the threat of sanctions that the World Trade Organisation would impose.



But the developing countries smell a double standard. They suspect that the North is not really concerned about child labour in the South so much as protecting Northern jobs. Until the developed countries are willing to improve market access to goods produced in the South, the developing countries are wary of accepting social clauses.

The battle against child labour has to be comprehensive and take place on a wide variety of fronts. But, as the Oslo conference put it, experience shows that "child labour is not an insoluble problem".

Young at work

Percentage of all children from 5 to 14 years old who work, by region, 1995, %

Region	Boys	Girls
World	27.0	22.3
Africa	44.8	36.7
Asia	22.0	20.0
Latin America & Caribbean	46.0	11.0
Oceania	21.6	9.2

The Oslo International Action Plan

1. Encourage countries to ratify and implement
   - A The convention on the rights of the child
   - B The ILO Minimum Age Convention no 138 (at the moment fifteen years)
   - C The new ILO convention to prevent under eighteens working in hazardous industries
2. Give more money to projects that assist children to go to school rather than work
3. Subsidise families for loss of earnings
4. Combat poverty via aid programmes which promote economic growth, education and health
5. Examine existing development programmes to make better use of resources and improve their impact
6. Improve the systems of gathering and monitoring information within developing countries, so as to understand and tackle the causes of child labour more effectively

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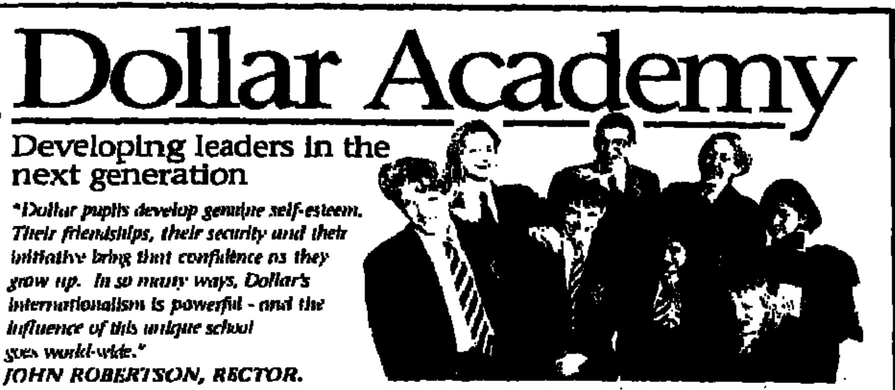
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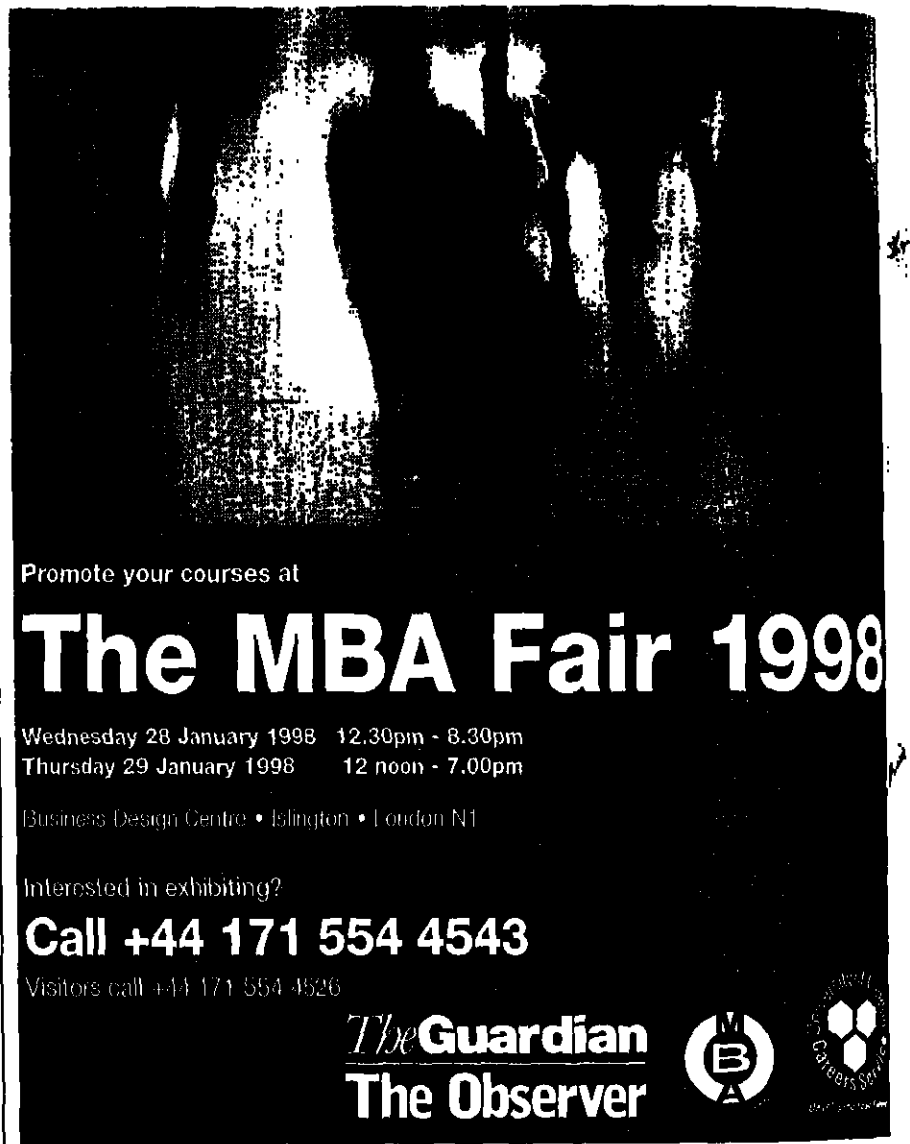
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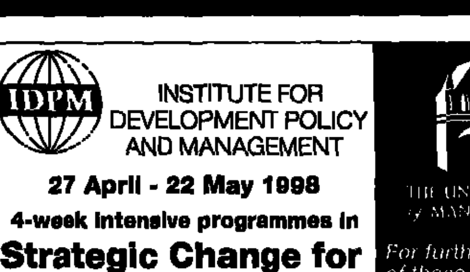
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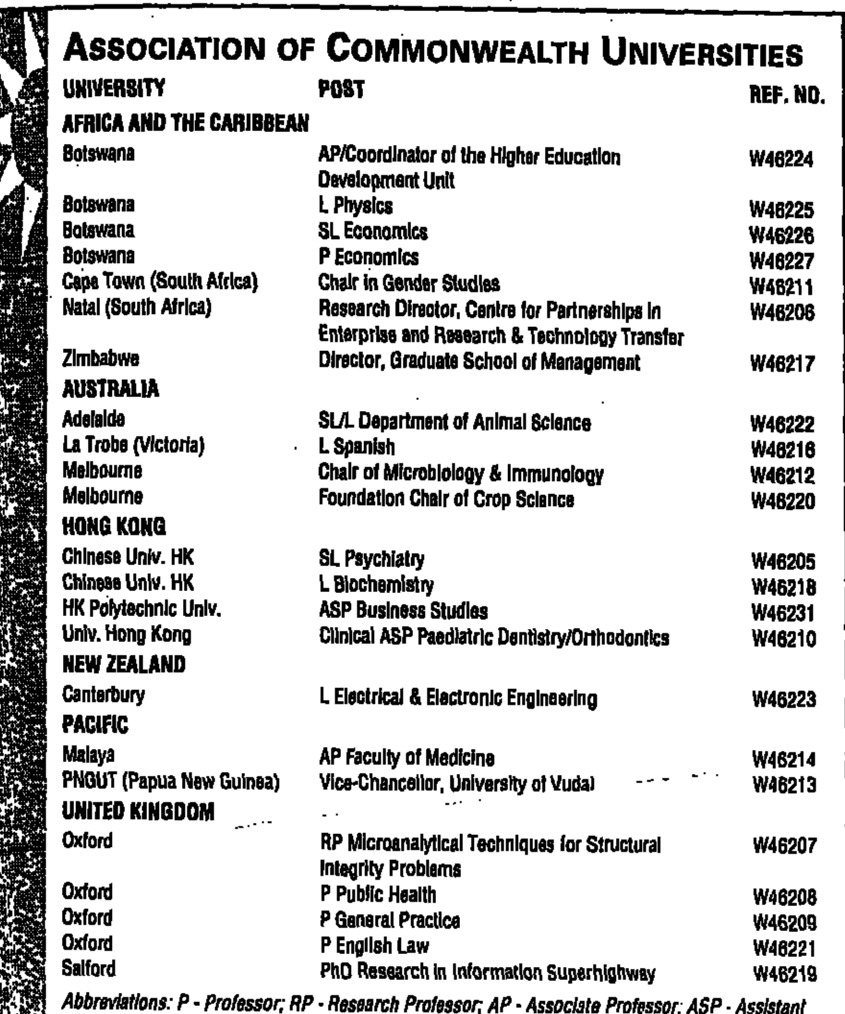
Usually	- Indications that the child is lazy or "late developer"
Often	- Slow reading so that the sense is lost
Often	- Slow writing and use of restricted vocabulary of small words. cannot spell longer words.
Sometimes	- reversed, rotated or twisted letters when writing.
Sometimes	- clumsiness, left-handedness, difficulty in telling left from right.
Sometimes	- a family history of learning difficulties
Sometimes	- difficulty in learning lists and labels in the right order
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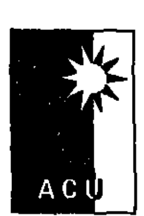


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Lost for words in Francophonia

John Ryle reflects on a French folly in Hanoi

IN HANOI, a grandiose but melancholy event almost unremarked in the English-speaking world has been taking place: the Seventh Francophone Summit Conference. Costing $17 million, the summit — or the Conference of Chiefs of State and Government of Countries having French in Common, to give it its full name — brought together representatives of more than 40 countries, including the French president Jacques Chirac.

Melancholy? Well, for a start, hardly anyone in Vietnam speaks French. And those who don't have little desire to learn. What they want to learn, of course, is English. Or Mandarin Chinese. Or Korean. But French? *Pourquoi*? In Laos and Cambodia, the other former French colonies in Southeast Asia, indifference to the Francophone heritage is still more striking. In Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital, you can visit English Street which boasts language schools from one end to the other. By night it is the busiest thoroughfare outside the red-light district. But not one of the schools teaches French.

A few years ago, the French ambassador to Cambodia was foolish enough to acknowledge this obvious fact. A stiff memo from the Quai d'Orsay, and he was forced to retract. Today, the organisers of the Francophone summit acknowledge, sniffily, that English is the language of commerce in Asia; but French, they assert, is the language of *"fraternité et culture"*. The summit, accordingly, has witnessed the creation of a new post, a secretary-general of the Francophone world, whose task will be to forge new bonds between the diverse countries where French is spoken.

Perhaps we should admire their sang-froid. In the face of a shrinking share of the market, the French put on a big show. Forty-six countries were represented at the summit. But some of them are, to put it mildly, marginal to the Francophone world. They included São Tome, where they speak Portuguese; Moldavia, where the language is Romanian; and Egypt, where the study of French is the prerogative of the rich.

The fact is that French is no longer a world language in any politically significant sense. Chinese, Arabic, Spanish and Portuguese are all spoken by more people. There are fewer French speakers in the world than there are Portuguese speakers in Brazil alone. Yet even in Britain we are still under the spell of French, learning it routinely as our first foreign language. You would think we might take a cue from the students on English Street and consider Chinese instead.

Not that there is anything wrong with studying French, or the great heritage of literature and philosophy that it embodies. It is the linguistic imperialism of the French government we should deplore.

The Francophone summit is merely a folly, but the language issue has led to much greater disasters in French foreign policy: French support for the genocidal government in Rwanda was, to a considerable extent, because the *génocidaires* spoke French (while the Tutsi rebels who overcame them were largely Anglophone); and French support for Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his disastrous term as secretary-general of the United Nations — and their attempt to secure a second term for him — was based, similarly, on the fact that he is a Francophone. No surprise that it is he who, last weekend, was appointed secretary-general of the imaginary empire of Francophonia.

Unlike the British, who have long since surrendered possession of their language and contemplate its local variations with equanimity, the French are obsessed with maintaining the purity of the tongue. The attempts of the Académie Française to legislate against foreign borrowings have been mocked often enough. Now the struggle has been taken into cyberspace. Under a law passed in 1994, the French campus of an American university, Georgia Tech, has been prosecuted for posting a website in English. President Chirac himself has made a fuss about the predominance of English on the European Union website.

Again, it's not that it is bad to be concerned about the state of the language; it's just that it's pointless. How did English get where it is today? By absorbing vast amounts of Norman French vocabulary in the Middle Ages. English is, in fact, a Franco-saxophone language. Imagine trying to purge it of foreign elements, the way the French authorities are trying to do with theirs.

There's simply no way of preserving a living language in a state of purity. In Dakar last week, in the heart of Francophone West Africa, I met two acquaintances on the street, a Muslim and a Rastafarian. *"Asalaam alaikum* — peace be with you," said the Muslim. *"Bonjour,"* said the Rastafarian, *"Maximum respect à toi."*

That's the way it's going: hybrid cultures, creole languages. France's linguistic Maginot line cannot hold.

E-mail: john.ryle@ibm.net

Letter from upstate New York Jo Salas

A brightening in the fall

ALL OVER the rose-pink dining room the Sunday dinner conversations are quiet and slow, except at the next table where an old man holds court with a bevy of old women. They laugh and chatter, all but one.

At our table I search for small talk to ease us out of silence.

"What's been going on at Chestnut Hollow?" I ask my father-in-law. He pauses in his careful eating and makes a sharp, dismissive gesture.

"Nothing!" he says. "Death!" he says. "Death goes on here."

The residents shuffle back towards their rooms with walkers or canes, some attached by nose tubes to small oxygen tanks. They pause to speak to the man at the table by ours. "Good luck, Dan," they say. He is going into the hospital tomorrow to have an operation. He pats their shoulders, making jokes about knives. Curled in her chair, his wife smiles blankly at the table cloth, her eyes level with the salt shaker.

Dan comes over to give us directions for a scenic autumn drive. He used to be this upstate city's police chief and knows the area well. He's a big man, still powerful. My father-in-law wishes him well for his surgery.

"Oh I'll be all right," he says, then looks serious. "It's Tessie I'm worried about," nodding toward his wife. "I don't know how she'll manage. The doc says I have to stay there four or five days."

Behind him his wife totters to her feet, ready to leave. She is like a shrunken rice-paper doll. Her mouth is dropped open in the caricature of a good-humoured smile. All expression has drained from it, leaving only an open mouth and fixed eyes. Dan puts his arm around her and draws hers around him. He is a giant beside her.

"This is my bride," he says looking down at her proudly. "Fifty-eight years we've been married." He fetches her wheelchair while she holds on to my husband's outstretched hand for support. Her face registers nothing.

She clambers awkwardly into the wheelchair. Dan pushes it past our table then pauses with another idea about the route to the lake. Tessie is parked close to me. I turn to say hello to her. She leans forward slightly.

"Your hair. Is so pretty," she says to me. Her voice is the thinnest of threads. Now I can see that her eyes are steady, not blank as I'd thought, ageless and penetrating as she looks at me still smiling her open-mouthed smile.

From behind her Dan reaches over and lowers a plate on to her knees. It is her uneaten dinner. The smile vanishes. She makes no effort to receive the plate. I try to help her position it on her lap, thinking that perhaps she's not able to hold it easily. She looks upset. Am I seeing anger? Disgust? I look at the plateful of chopped grey pieces of meat and waterlogged vegetables covered in plastic wrap.

"You don't want it?" I say.

Looking straight ahead she murmurs just loudly enough for me to hear: "Maybe I'll throw it on the floor again."

For a moment I consider doing it for her. Dan notices us.

"What's the matter?" he asks.

"She doesn't want it," I say.

"That's all right, I'll make her eat it," he says. "I'm bigger than her." He's jocular and we chuckle uneasily.

Tessie is frightening me with that look of despair on her face as she stares in front of her. Out of her view, Dan loses his smile too. His face reddens and for a moment I think he will cry. "She's . . ." He points to his head and shakes it sadly.

He wheels her away. Tessie looks back at me and mouths goodbye, her smile fixed back in place.

We drive to the lake past crimson maples and orchards selling apples and fresh-pressed cider. My father-in-law is suddenly animated as we sit by the shore, huddling together against the stiff wind that blows the water into little whitecaps. He talks about the heyday of his work in West Africa when he administered a huge foundation. He talks about life at Chestnut Hollow, where he has no friends.

When we visit again a month later he tells us that Tessie came to life, walking and talking unaided, while Dan was in the hospital. He does not remember the lake.

Nature's flight of fancy

Alex Bellos

WHEN a group of Berkshire nuns complained last month of harassment by a black swan, little did they know it was the wildfowl find of the century.

For the annoying bird was not a swan at all but a "gwan" — a hybrid of a goose and a swan, according to an ornithologist.

Although on first sight the gwan resembles a large black swan, on closer examination the "completely bizarre bird" has chunky pink goose-legs and a goose beak. It also honks like a goose.

"It would be exceptional circumstances for a goose and a swan to interbreed, but there is no doubt that it has happened," says Jon Bowler of the Slimbridge wildfowl and wetlands trust in Gloucestershire.

According to Dr Bowler, who has a doctorate in swan studies, cross-breeding can occur with birds in captivity when one of the parents becomes "imprinted" by birds of the other parent's species. Probably a swan's egg had hatched in a group of young geese, or vice versa, and the bird grew up feeling he or she belonged to the other species.

The resulting hybrid progeny was discovered when the nuns asked for what they thought was a swan to be taken from Sunninghill in Berkshire to the Swan Lifeline sanctuary in nearby Eton, run by Joan Shearer. She noticed that it had certain goose-like marks, and honked, and contacted Dr Bowler.

The gwan, believed to be aged 10, is now in a pen with mute swans and has not been aggressive. It — the bird has not been sexed — will probably be given to a swan-owner in Dorset.

It is likely to be the first and last of its race because hybrids are usually infertile. "It's nature's way of making sure the species carries on as intended," said Dr Bowler.



The gwan ... looks like a swan, honks like a goose PHOTO: NICHOLAS BENN

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

***WHY DO* stock market crashes seem to happen in October?**

BECAUSE October sees the start of the fall. — *Peter Barnes, Milton Keynes*

PROBABLY as a result of the autumn phenomenon of seasonal affective disorder. As the weather turns colder and the amount of daylight reduces, people start to feel depressed, and investors take a gloomy view of economic prospects. If the world's major stock markets were in the southern hemisphere, the peak season for crashes would probably be in April. — *Alan Clarke, Redland, Bristol*

***COULD* someone explain the term "Private", as in the army? In three and a half years at this rank I never had one moment of privacy.**

PRIVATE first meant without office or rank, from Latin *privare*, to deprive. — *Peter Daniel, York*

***WHAT* is the derivation of the expression "nitty gritty"?**

AMERICAN dictionaries of slang state that the expression first occurred in American black popular music in the 1950s. Its first use in its current sense was in a speech by the then president of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People. The erroneous idea that it was a phrase used by slave owners to describe raping female slaves seems to have arisen a few years ago on a social work training course. — *Owen Wells, Ilkley, West Yorkshire*

***WHY* does "autumn" have a separate American name, while the other three seasons don't?**

AUTUMN has a separate name in the United States so we remember to spring forward and fall back as we change the clocks during the year. — *Kit Sutherland, Modena, Italy*

"SPRING", "summer" and "winter" are verbs, and the American penchant for action demands a verb for autumn, hence "fall". "Autumn" is the only season which is a noun, deriving from the Latin.

"Fall" also nicely rounds out the Old English or Old German set of origins for the seasons, as the others are all of that lineage. — *Robert Tzopa, Ottawa, Canada*

IN THE 17th century both "fall" and "autumn" were perfectly respectable on either side of the Atlantic. Some Americanisms, such as this, are older and therefore more traditional than their current British counterparts; viz. gotten. Perhaps America's having not yet gotten rid of most of its trees suggested fall as the more appropriate name to keep. — *David Walmsley, Vancouver, Canada*

***WHAT* happens to you when you "see stars"?**

"SEEING STARS" happens especially after a trauma to the rear of the head, where the visual cortex can be found. Trauma can cause neurones in the brain to fire randomly, and the visual areas interpret this as a visual event in the real world. — *Jonathan Tasker, Oxford*

Any answers?

WHICH* is more energy efficient — boiling water using an electric kettle, a kettle on a gas hob, or in a microwave oven? — *Gordon Mackie, Milton Keynes

QUEUING* at petrol stations is minimised by roughly equal numbers of cars having their petrol tanks on the left and on the right. Is there some agreement between car manufacturers on this? — *J Mirdamadi, Liverpool

WHAT* is the difference between fur and hair? I've heard people can be allergic to the former and have no problems with the latter. — *Felicity Maier-DaCola, Zoefing, Austria

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

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Indonesia has been held up to the world as an economic miracle. For two decades, forests have been burned down to make way for intensive agriculture. This year it paid the price. **John Vidal** reports

A smouldering catastrophe

EARLY-MORNING mist on the great, grey Barito river, which flows south to the Java Sea from the central mountains of Borneo, is common as boiled rice. It shrouds the decks of the river's 10,000 or more houseboats, swirls around the water markets, sawmills and timber yards, and creeps up through the plank floors of the stilt houses built over the water. And then, within an hour of dawn, the quickly-rising equatorial sun burns it off. Or that's what used to happen.

But on Sunday, October 26, like so many other times this year, the sun isn't working. The Barito, a life-support system for thousands of villagers from the Dayak region, as well as newer populations of loggers, tradesmen and plantation workers, is impossible to distinguish. A bleak, white night has fallen. It merges air, water and land, and reduces visibility to three or four metres. The sun is invisible; the air is as solid as chipboard, full of dust, choking hot and claustrophobic. The pall of smoke from countless fires in Central Kalimantan (Borneo, as it used to be known) has enveloped everything.

For the communities up and down the Barito, the atmosphere is as bad as it has been all year.

The smog fills the lungs, hangs on irritated eyes, dislocates the senses. Sounds are muffled. A heavy peat smell pervades everything. The birds are silent. The forest is eerily quiet and, without the moon, even the frogs don't croak. Shapes loom briefly out of nowhere and pass into nothing.

This particular Sunday, a ferry is returning 60 transmigrant farm workers from a market downstream to President Suharto's much-vaunted giant rice-growing project. It must keep going if it is to return to the communities in the north before dark. The narrow, 20-metre craft — loaded with people, timber, construction materials and livestock — moves gingerly through the wall of smog. Without warning, a black phantom — an old tug — looms out of the sepulchral light. The people packed on the ferry bow and roof barely glimpse the danger. The flimsy, overburdened ferry is hit and sinks in a few minutes, but no one on the land hears the screams or even sees the accident. At least 28 people drown, caught in a chaos of spars, produce and chickens.

The Barito river deaths are just the latest in a series of major accidents that are partly or wholly attributable to the fires, the smog and the great drought that took hold in April right across Southeast Asia, turning the land tinder-dry.

The death toll of remote tribesmen living in stone-age conditions in the inaccessible highlands of Irian Jaya, now drought-stricken and consumed by smoke, is approaching 500. The full effects on Indonesia's thousands of species of mammal, plant and bird are still unknown.

At its height, in late September, 1 million square kilometres of land and sea and as many as 70 million people were affected by the smog, with pollution readings rising off the scale to dangerous levels. The smog comes largely from thousands of fires that were deliberately started and are now raging out of control. It is part of a process where land that has been formerly cleared of forest is now laid bare (burning being the quickest method) for conversion into large plantations for pulp and paper, oil palm and rice. Many of the fires are smouldering deep underground in peat deposits that are practically impossible for humans to extinguish, and are still spreading to virgin forest.

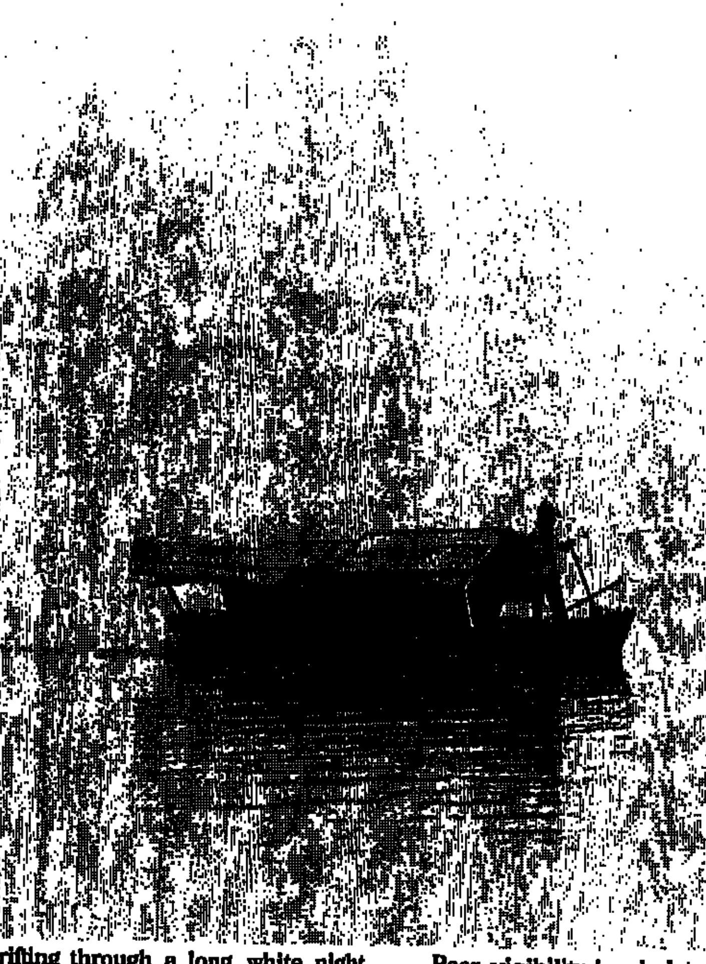
And while the Western media has largely moved on, the smog is still there, drifting backwards and forwards across six Southeast Asian countries, worse than ever in some places. Parts of the huge islands of Sumatra and Kalimantan have been acutely affected now for 20 weeks. Last month, more than 40 Indonesian cities were covered. Further afield, Singaporeans have seen the moon only once in four months, the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur has fumed for most of the summer, and holidaymakers at Thai holiday resorts more than 1,600km from the nearest fires have choked. Hundreds of small communities have run out of water. In total, some 100,000 people across Southeast Asia have sought medical help for respiratory problems.

The tropical monsoons — the only thing that will eventually put out the fires — are already two months late.

Indonesia is vast, with 17,000 islands, hundreds of languages, the longest coastline in the world and the largest stretches of virgin forest outside Brazil. Having cut down almost 50 million hectares of forest in the past 25 years to sell timber cheaply to Japan, Indonesia is now industrialising the degraded land as rapidly as possible. It has achieved, or so it seemed, an economic miracle. "The fires are the underbelly of the free-for-all economy that the World Bank, the IMF and the bankers have underwritten and held up as an example to other developing countries," says Chip Barber of the World Resources Institute in Washington. "The social price is immense. Average wages have risen from less than £50 a year in 1970 to more than £600 ($1,000) today. Meanwhile the poorest have suffered."

Barber is working with a team of international economists for the World Wide Fund for Nature to count the cost. First estimates put the loss of revenue from tourism, crops, health costs, legal compensation and health effects at more than $20 billion. Cash crops have been devastated, and oil palm, rice, tea and coffee, and rubber crops have been affected. Meanwhile thousands of firms across the region have had to shut up shop, at least temporarily.

The Indonesian government knew about the oncoming drought back in March and was warned by its own scientists and environmental groups about the fires and smog that were likely to result. Now Indonesia is paying the price of its deforestation and intensive-farming policies, and inflicting the same catastrophic consequences on half a dozen of its neighbours.



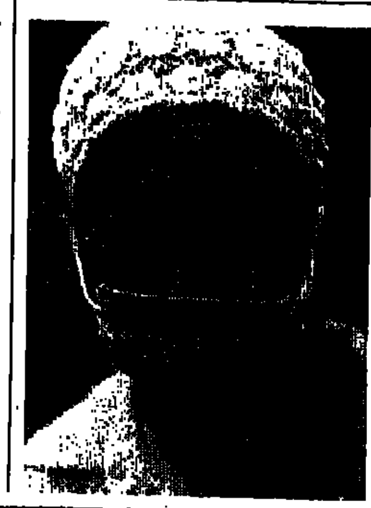
Drifting through a long, white night . . . Poor visibility has led to innumerable accidents on the roads and waterways of Indonesia and Malaysia
PHOTOGRAPHS: MARK FALLANDER, V MILADINOVIC

Rather than blame land-development policies that subsidise massive burnings of old forest lands, or the rampant political patronage system, the political élite has prepared the tinder-dry land for the disaster as deliberately as anyone laying kindling in a grate. Now, the increasingly embarrassed and divided administration, forced to apologise to other countries, has settled on nature as prime culprit. The domestic press has been invited to play down the scandal, and Indonesia's 200 million people have little idea what is happening.

The government's full-time Disaster Emergency Department, set up to deal with natural disasters of all kinds, is a study of public concern and official complacency. In the department's colonial-style building in the centre of the car-choked, smoked-glass-and-air-conditioned capital, Jakarta, tired young volunteers from environment groups and universities receive e-mails and fax reports from around the country. They pin terse daily reports to the walls from scattered towns and cities, detailing poor visibility, smog-related illnesses, acid rain and food and water shortages.

In the corner of the room sit 36 boxes containing 60,000 Swedish industrial face-masks to counter the smog, donated by Unicef. They have been there for six days. A volunteer shrugs his shoulders: "There are bad problems in co-ordination. There are bureaucratic foul-ups everywhere. The government says it will send them some time, but to whom, and when? There have to be ceremonies for receiving the masks. They sit here while everyone chokes."

Upstairs, a dozen government bureaucrats responsible for co-ordinating the response to the fires and charting their course sit drinking tea in a haze of cigarette smoke. "The rains will come very soon," says the head of the office. "Fire is normal at this time of year in Indonesia. Every farmer clears land at the end of the growing season with fire; towns burn their rubbish. It is no problem. Everything is under control now."



Why are these 60,000 masks sitting unused? 'There have to be ceremonies for receiving the masks. They sit here while everyone chokes'

Walhi, the Indonesian Environment Forum, is a coalition of hundreds of community and social justice groups. It knows more than most about what is happening on the ground, especially in Sumatra and in Kalimantan, the two biggest centres of the fires.

Frequently denounced by the government and industry as "political agitators" or "communists" for exposing the corruption of the private sector, Walhi has provided the only independent Asian overview of what is happening. In such a repressive political system as Indonesia's, to dispute the bland, albeit conflicting, central government statements is to risk its freedom — both as an organisation and of its individual workers.

Walhi believes that at the very least 1.7 million hectares (four million-plus football pitches) of forests and other land, far more than the government admits, have already been burned, and that fires are out of control in southern Sumatra and parts of Kalimantan. With the fires still spreading into peatlands and primary forest, the full figure will be much higher.

Walhi's admittedly imperfect research suggests that 80 per cent of the fires started in intensive palm-oil or timber plantations, a smaller number in forests, and even fewer as a result of local farmers routinely burning off small one- or two-hectare plots.

Three hundred kilometres up the Barito river is the Dayak village of Dadahup in central Kalimantan. A satellite photograph shows this area to be the source of much of the smog that has plagued the vast region of peat-swamp forests and drifted north and west to Malaysia and Thailand.

Dadahup is comparatively wealthy, with 100 or more rattan farmers who have perfected the growth of this prized creeper over centuries and whose crops are exported for furniture and baskets around the world. Their rattan "gardens" border the river, stretching back 5km on traditional land. But the village is an oasis surrounded by the first phase of Suharto's billion-dollar-plus Peatlands rice project.

The president is an old Java rice grower, obsessed with making Indonesia self-sufficient. He has personally ordered that 6,000 square kilometres of low-lying, mostly degraded lowland peat-swamp forest be converted by 2002 into one of the world's largest rice-growing areas. It is a microcosm of what is happening throughout Indonesia.

Suharto has instructed seven ministers to supervise his project. They intend to import up to 1 million people to work the rice fields. Each family will be given a small house, two acres of land, a wage of just under $2 a day and subsidised food for 18 months. The project is top priority, and Suharto has said that it will be paid for out of a $1.3 billion fund set aside to replant logged forests. Giant, 60km-long irrigation canals and a network of smaller ones have already been cut through the peat, 600 families have been shipped in and the first villages are being built.

Privately, most observers say that the project is a crackpot, Stalinist-style plan to re-order nature, certain to fail because of its unmanageable scale and the unforgiving, little-understood peat terrain. Critical environment-impact surveys — which report that the ecology of the whole region will be altered and that the social effects of moving in hundreds of thousands of families will be damaging — have been shelved in favour of more positive ones. It is

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widely believed in the bureaucracy that no one dares tell the president — who was given a UN prize in 1985 for stimulating rice production — what is happening to his rice. It's a case of *Asal bapak senang* ("As long as the boss is happy").

For a start, the rice will not grow. Only 40 of the 700 hectares so far cultivated have yielded crops this year because of disastrous infestations of worms and diseases. The smog has delayed the arrival of imported workers. The whole hydrology of the area has been affected, with the water table dropping. The Barito river has turned a bright green and is mostly undrinkable. And everywhere the land has been systematically and deliberately torched. Meanwhile the project has requisitioned — and its agents have set fire to — half of Dadahup's rattan gardens.

Suharto's grand project is today one of the most desolate spots on earth — a vast, stinking, blackened, smouldering and toasted place. Thousands of square kilometres of land are shrouded in smog, as the earth itself burns from deep below in the peat of would-be paddy fields. Stretches of primary forest have been swept by fire, but still stand, dead but not down. The largest trees are burned 20 metres up their trunks. Everywhere trees are being felled illegally, and floated down the canals to the Barito.

The more valuable ones are being towed to Bandjarmasin to be sold for export, and the dross is sawn and planked by any one of 100 illegal sawmills operating this stretch of the river. Bought with no questions asked, the timber is sold on to constructors building houses for transmigration workers.

Satellite photographs show how the fires were deliberately started along the recently-constructed canals and then allowed to spread to the whole vast area, stretching along one side of the Barito river 80km north to the town of Palangkaraya. Nothing, says village leader Darmawan, is left. "There is nothing to make a living here."

Who precisely started the fires on the project area is unclear, but the trail of smoke stretches, via local politicians and industry, all the way to central government and Suharto himself. The villagers say that they were lit by people working for the canal-builders. "No, they weren't. They started with people coming from outside to clear the land for logging," retorts an administrator at one of the chaotic canal-building sites a few kilometres from Dadahup.

Whoever actually lit the fires, the result is greatly beneficial to Suharto, and more particularly to one of his sons — who heads a company supplying the wood for the 300,000 transmigrant houses needed — and to the son of the governor of Kalimantan, who has a stake in cutting the canals. It is in their companies' interests that the land is cleared quickly and cheaply. Neither man is available to comment.

"What can you do?" asks a European recently attached to a regional government. "There are 200 million people here trying to live. The best way to make money is to get a concession [to log and otherwise exploit forest]. If you clear land [by fire] and plant just a few trees, you can get most of your money back in grants for plantations. You are effectively paid to burn the land." For many, he says, the smog signifies not environmental destruction and hardship, but prosperity and life. "The forests are revenue sources, and that's it. The ministry of forestry tries, but it doesn't conduct its own operation. Civil servants make up their salaries with squeeze and graft. Everyone knows it's a disaster and a disgrace, but no one will say anything for fear of reprisals." In Central Kalimantan, he says, the 600 forest concessions given on 20-year licences are parcelled out strictly for financial and political reasons.

Surviving in Indonesian business is hard. There are effective monopolies controlled by a handful of people for the sale and distribution of plywood, pulp, rattan, rice and almost every natural resource. Suharto's 20 personal trusts are immense, and his six children all have massive business interests in everything from automobiles to hotel development and pulp.

Environment minister Sarwono Kusumaatmadja and forestry minister Jamaluddin Suryohadikasumo are the two men who have come out of the 1997 fires with their political reputations intact. Suryohadikasumo released — to fellow ministers' dismay — a list of 176 plantation, timber, construction companies and transmigration schemes suspected of burning the land on a large scale. These include 43 Malaysian companies, but the numbers have since been reduced by 30, and some notable businessmen have escaped.

But the Indonesian government, despite saying it intends to prosecute, has withdrawn only 66 permissions to cut more wood this year, and has not revoked anyone's 20-year concessions to log. There have been no public investigations of plantation owners. Bizarrely, too, the fires on Suharto's rice project have not been identified officially, and the daily maps of "hot spots" issued to journalists in Jakarta never include any in the area designated for rice.

The short-term ecological effects of the fires are still being assessed, but in an interim report the World Wide Fund for Nature called the 1997 fires a "global catastrophe".

The longer-term effects are unknown. Were this a one-off event, the forests and the species would fully recover. But the Indonesian environment has been chronically deteriorating year after year as land has been cleared and the seas overfished, making it harder each time for nature to recover. The expected massive run-off of fresh water and sediment when the rains finally come may further damage many coral reefs that cannot live if silted up, and also mangrove forests, which are intolerant of fresh water.

The worst news is that the fires and drought have further weakened the natural defences of forests. With the UN's World Meteorological Office predicting the real possibility of another drought next year, the fires could be far worse in future.

Up in the highlands of Irian Jaya, another tragedy is unfolding. The government will release little or no information, but missionaries report that isolated tribes in the mountainous interior are suffering terribly as the drought bites, wild-fires blaze out of control and smoke hampers any relief effort.

"More than 500 people are thought to have died as a direct result of the drought," says missionary airforce pilot Paul Berkhert. "One more month of this and we are in the middle of a real tragedy. People are only now beginning to understand the emergency."

Black soul of American manhood

LONDON FILM FESTIVAL
Derek Malcolm

AFFLICTION, says writer Paul Schrader, is the story of someone trying to run faster than fate. But Nick Nolte's performance as an alcoholic lawman who thinks a hunting accident may have been murder at first seems like an atmospheric thriller in which no one runs fast and the mystery looks like taking a long time to unravel.

But, like The Sweet Hereafter, this is a Russell Banks story, and so we gradually begin to suspect it is not about the possible murder, but about the lawman's personal history. Nolte's portrait gives the impression that here is a man weighed down not only by toothache but by a past he can't handle.

Given the chance, Nolte always suggests not so much hidden depths as open sores, and Schrader — the writer of Taxi Driver and Raging Bull — is an expert at constructing dramatic edifices that give potent performers every opportunity.

What we discover, in this cold, enclosed little world, is that the lawman's unsatisfactory present has been caused by an abusive father whose idea of manhood is power through strength and the imposition of violence.

The film is told through a series of flashbacks, with veteran James Coburn as the lawman's drunken and threatening father. Coburn, who has been known to stroll through parts relying on a well-honed screen persona to get him past clichéd lines, gives a terrifying portrait of a man who can only express love through what looks very much like hate, reducing his wife to terror and his sons (Nolte and the equally impressive Willem Dafoe) to impotent desperation.

But if Affliction is a serious study of what Schrader calls "the black soul of American manhood", it is too well made and far too well acted to grind us into the dust emotionally. This is a powerful and thought-provoking film, cast in the form of a familiar genre but easily transcending it. It is one of the few American films this year that attempt psychological depth, and it has the skill to achieve it.

With the exception of Michael Haneke's terrifying Funny Games, no film has arrived at the festival with a more sensational reputation than Lynne Stopkewich's **Kissed**, a debut from Canada which dares to make its female protagonist a necrophiliac. Its achievement is that it succeeds in divesting its subject matter of any real sense of outrage.

Molly Parker plays the young woman in question, with Natasha Morley equally good as her 12-year-old self, performing elaborate burial rituals for the animals killed by her pet cat. When she grows up, the rituals take on an erotic content for the lonely small-town girl, and she begins work in a funeral home. For her, the dead are less threatening than the living, and thus more desirable.

Stopkewich's film is never exploitative and is more sensuous than openly erotic. It has both style and purpose as an adaptation of a Barbara Gowdy story that, once again, seeks to redefine the sexuality of women. You would have to be pretty tender to be shocked at the result.

Thinking he was unlikely to get a prize, Shohei Imamura went back to Japan after the premiere at this year's Cannes festival of his first film for seven years. To his — and most people's — surprise, The Eel won the coveted Palme d'Or jointly with Abbas Kirostami's A Taste Of Cherries. This made him, together with the Serbian Emir Kusturica, the only director since the war who has won Cannes twice: Imamura's The Ballad Of Narayama was successful in 1983. But neither film is as outstanding as The Insect Woman and Vengeance Is Mine.

The Eel has Koji Yakusho as an ordinary man in extraordinary circumstances. He has killed his wife after finding her *in flagrante*, come out of prison after eight years, bought himself a barber's shop in a remote village and is about to settle down with his pet eel for company when his crime catches up with him.

Having saved a woman from suicide, he takes her in as an assistant, and the lonely, taciturn man begins to live again. But he's recognised as a killer, extortionists appear and his possible liberation from introspection seems likely to be abortive.

Imamura tells his tale, taken from a short story by Akira Yoshimura called Glistening In The Dark, in a bold mixture of styles encompassing horror (the murder) and passages near to farce, while at other times this seems the creation of a classically trained film-maker working out for himself a quiet psychological drama. Yakusho's understated, immaculate performance gives the film its holding centre.

Moore is hell

CINEMA
Richard Williams

WHEN Lieutenant Jordan O'Neil becomes the first woman to attempt to qualify for membership of the United States Navy's special operations unit, she finds herself surrounded by a bunch of crop-headed, dog-tagged chaps with tanned musculature ballooning out of their cut-off T-shirts and rolled-up shorts. These boys are into uniforms and ritual humiliation. Before long, there are whispers that Lt O'Neil is gay, but to the audience it's obvious that the smear has been misdirected. Omaha Beach? This bunch of sailors would have trouble taking South Beach. Assassinate Castro? They could tell you the way to Castro Street.

That's enough jolly homophobia. But GI Jane doesn't exactly encourage a refinement of the critical response. Ridley Scott's film may want to present itself as a feminist broadside, but in essence it exists as nothing more or less than a star vehicle for Demi Moore, who seems to believe that the best way of establishing women's equality is to prove that she can sink to the same depths as men and come up smelling just as bad.

A humble topographic analyst in naval intelligence, O'Neil establishes her credentials by summoning her fretful boyfriend back into the bath with a cheery cry of "Get your dick back in here!" Putting herself forward for the training programme, she is sponsored by a Texas senator (Anne Bancroft) who, like the rest of the military-political establishment, has reasons for wanting her protégée to fail.

Cover your ears . . . GI Jane, a demonstration in sonic warfare

Switching easily into the mode of An Officer And A Gentleman, the story shunts the candidate through trial by insult, endurance and discomfort, during which many of her male colleagues fall away. O'Neil's refusal to quit gives Moore several chances to demonstrate her unique commitment to feminism. She shaves her own head, in a sequence shot with loving elaboration. She performs one-handed crossover push-ups, in a variety of attractive gym-wear. She trades punches and kicks with the grandiosely titled Master Chief John Urgayle, her training officer.

The Master Chief presents a precise duplication of the role played in An Officer And A Gentleman by Lou Gossett Jr, who exchanged bloody noses with Richard Gere before swapping status and touching his forelock to his former pupil at the passing-out ceremony. Viggo Mortensen's Master Chief is an Aryan psychopath whose warrior attitude blends standard-issue sadism with a fondness for quoting the verses of Lawrence and Neruda — although never for long enough to challenge the attention span of the average Demi Moore fan.

After overcoming the lesbian entrapment, and having put the devious senator from Texas back on the straight and narrow, O'Neil finds herself involved in a real military action in which the trainees are detailed to help recover a nuclear device from the Libyan desert. Here Scott and his screenwriters want it both ways: after being thrust into a position of leadership, the strong woman suddenly becomes a damsel in distress, rescued by a wretched little anti-climax.

Moore brings to the part a worked-out, built-up physique and a low, rasping voice. The body would earn points with the special forces, but she'd get nowhere with that voice. For this is one of those American military films that thinks wars are won by the people who can shout the loudest. Which proves, yet again, their failure to learn the lesson of their most traumatic defeat.

When the North Vietnamese Army came ghosting down the Ho Chi Minh Trail to the very gates of Saigon, were they shouting at the tops of their voices to demonstrate their machismo? They were not. They knew the value of silence and surprise, not to mention black pyjamas. You only have to watch Oliver Stone's Platoon, another of these Kleenex-in-the-ears movies, to understand where it all went wrong. While the Americans were unloading their angst at maximum volume, they couldn't hear the gooks burrowing away beneath their feet. GI Jane suggests that, a quarter of a century later, similar circumstances would produce a similar result. If General Giap ever sees it, he'll laugh his little rubber sandals off.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
November 23 1997

The guitar's lucky day

MUSIC
Adam Sweeting

THE story goes that Paco de Lucia only took up playing the guitar because he was too shy to pursue his true goal of becoming a singer. It turned out to be the guitar's lucky day, since Paco has developed into one of its most admired practitioners. He has made classical recordings, and is occasionally persuaded to form a trio with jazzmen John McLaughlin and Al di Meola, but his soul is in flamenco.

Paco is celebrated as an innovator of *nuevo flamenco*, a fusion style which embraces influences from bossa nova to rock. But, as he says, "you grab tradition with one hand, and with the other you scratch, you search. You can go anywhere . . . but must never lose the root".

On stage at London's Barbican Hall, the 50-year-old maestro proves himself an equal opportunities employer. He distributes honours evenly among his septet, giving his musicians and dancer Joaquín Grilo room to shine. He says nothing, but occasionally offers the hint of a smile when one of his troupe achieves some special feat of musical acrobatics.

But the way he sits centre stage, the light accentuating the severe contours of his face as if he had been carved out of an Andalusian hillside, leaves no doubt that Paco is the dark mastermind of everything around him.

He writes all the material. The pieces fall under a variety of styles, but each one contrasts dense ensemble playing against skeletal percussion interludes and assorted solo escapades.

"A la Perla de Cádiz", for example, is built around Jorge Pardo's tense, fluttering flute solos, the rest of the group dropping back in support before diving back in as if to deliver a verdict on the soloist.

"Caña de Azúcar" is arranged for just three players, Paco being joined by a second guitar and bassist Carlos Guinart playing something resembling a giant lute. The trio set up a vibrant, chugging rhythm and bounced lead parts between themselves.

Aspiring guitarists ought to acquire videos of Paco and play them in slow motion, to study the way he uses his thumb to generate a powerful driving tone on the lower strings but alters his hand position to unleash blistering flurries of notes in the higher registers.

Paco's performance also forms a useful introduction to the mysteries of flamenco, which bears little resemblance to the tarts-and-toreador floorshows on the Costa del Sol. But user-friendly as his performances are, they suggest something of the violence and unforgivingness of the form.

Those qualities are vividly expressed in the singing of Duquende, a star in his own right in Spain. Perhaps that's why Paco originally wanted to sing, since it is in the voice that you can clearly hear flamenco's blend of the Gypsy and the Moorish.

In "Río Ancho", Duquende's performance grew increasingly harrowing as he moved from melancholic moans to shocking barks and yells. The large Spanish contingent in the audience roared approval. There was more going on here than mere entertainment.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
November 23 1997

Nice and queasy

THEATRE
Michael Billington

DRAMA. Dance. Music. Painting. Can they no longer be separated? Are we living at a time when they are merging into one aesthetic experience? If so, does it matter? These are the questions raised by Robert Wilson's **La Maladie de la Mort**, his idiosyncratic version of a Marguerite Duras text. Performed by Michel Piccoli and Lucinda Childs, the play packed out London's Peacock Theatre as part of the French Theatre Season.

Duras's brief prose-poem, first published in 1982, is a haunting study of the unbridgeable distance between men and women ("Men are homosexuals," Duras said in a later interview, meaning that their primary, heartfelt relationships are always with other men). In her story a man pays a woman to spend several nights with him. They have enthusiastic sex, graphically described, but he never penetrates her soul. Emotional strangers, they go their separate ways. The man, briefly occupied by the memory of the affair, realises he has experienced love in the only way possible for him, "losing it before it happened".

Heavy stuff — a reflection not just of the French idea of love as *égoïsme à deux* but of the notion that we are all permanently trapped inside our own skins. But Texan-born Wilson, a theatrical innovator who is revered throughout Europe, treats it with surprising lightness. What we get is a ravishing display of light, sound and movement. Whether it expresses Duras's text is another matter.

Wilson, who designs as well as directs, paints beautiful pictures. The passage of time — his abiding theme — is denoted by constantly shifting perspectives: a window that opens on to sea and sky alters its position for each of the seven scenes. Wilson also uses the performers' bodies like a mixture of sculptor and choreographer. Piccoli, clad in priestly black, starts as a tall, erect figure who dives, falls and frequently adopts what Lady Bracknell calls a "semi-recumbent posture" as the intimacies of sex progress. Lucinda Childs, an icon of progressive American dance, sports a silvery wig that makes her look like Arletty in the mime scenes from Les Enfants du Paradis and wears a long, trailing white gown that wraps around her like a winding sheet. Freeze the action at any moment and you have a stunning picture, not least when Piccoli and Childs are seen in ghostly silhouette against the background of a white cyclorama.

I enjoyed the show. It is refined, elegant, even funny. But although Wilson conveys the ultimate isolation of the two figures, something vital in the original goes missing. In Duras, not only is the whole experience described through the man's eyes, but the spiritual sadness is also counterpointed by an astonishing physical realism. ("You notice," runs Barbara Bray's translation, "that under your caresses the lips of her sex are swelling up and that from their smoothness comes a hot sticky liquid.") I'm not asking for literal illustration, but Wilson's style has a chaste refinement that turns Duras's earthiness into something formally aesthetic.

Wilson's work also raises that much bigger question: are the old categories breaking down? He himself has said, "All of my works are operas in the Latin sense of the word, meaning opus." They embrace light, sound, music and movement as well as language. They are immensely stylish and clearly derive from a powerful visual imagination: as one of his colleagues remarked at the Peacock, "Bob has to see something to understand the meaning of it." For me he is a rare and genuine talent but a dubious role-model.

Theatre has always been a collaborative art. But although it is unfashionable to say so, I wonder whether we shouldn't resurrect the idea of integrity of form. We seem to live in a melting-pot age of dance-drama, live art, visual theatre. I don't deny it can produce intriguing results. But I also see the danger of living in a hyphenated age when everything is merged in some kind of woolly combination. My hunch is that we are becoming preoccupied more by how a work of art is made rather than by what it is actually saying. Robert Wilson's new work is riveting to watch, but under its beguiling surface I detect a whiff of La Maladie de l'Art.



Fatal attraction . . . Javier de Frutos (right) with Jamie Watton PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN GODWIN

The terrible truth about love

DANCE
Judith Mackrell

IT'S a mystery how some performers get a buzz about them. Last year Javier de Frutos was playing one-night stands to a small and loyal public — mostly coterie dance fans and gays. This year tickets for his performances in Dance Umbrella sold out three weeks in advance and the phones haven't stopped ringing for returns. De Frutos has gained some notoriety because he often chooses to dance naked. But a bare willy doesn't attract the size of crowd seen at London's The Place, and De Frutos doesn't employ anyone to orchestrate his publicity.

So the puzzle remains. Why has he suddenly become the festival's hottest event? And how did his new audience manage to get their timing so right? De Frutos's new show, **Grass**, turns out to be by far the finest he's ever created.

Grass is a trio for two men and a woman, set to extracts from Puccini's Madam Butterfly. Taped opera in dance is generally tacky — the music sounds bad and is usually a cue for some instant unearned emotion. But De Frutos genuinely honours Puccini's opera — not by attempting to retell it but by digging into the pain that lies at its heart

Musically the show opens with Butterfly's aria as she awaits Pinkerton's return; to it, De Frutos dances a solo of yearning and seduction that is as desperate as it is beautiful.

He is by turns a delicately sinuous Arabic dancer and a tragic Swan Queen, but the object of his desire (Jamie Watton) remains unseeing and unmoved. Finally De Frutos wraps Watton's arms around himself in a parody of an embrace and his look of naked hunger captures heartbreakingly the raw nerves that jangle so hopefully within the music (and specifically in Maria Callas's voice in this recording).

Through all this, Pary Naderi remains the watchful outsider, moving round them in anxious little spasms, but in the next section she joins the men in a witty trio. The choreographic surface is a light tissue of elegantly inventive steps, but the underlying dynamics are treacherous. De Frutos shows how easily friendship can be ousted by passion, and Naderi is thrust aside as he hones into Watton, kissing him with the blind hunger of a vampire.

By itself this first half is a scarily accurate evocation of the cruelty and neediness of love. De Frutos tells his story with recklessly explicit gestures, as well as using the rhythms and pressure of pure dance to sustain his drama, and all three dancers perform with an extraordinary directness and authority. But love can destroy much more, and in the second half the two men appear naked, with dried blood daubed round their mouths and anuses, looking as if they've screwed themselves close to death.

Their dance together is flayed, tormenting, often hateful to watch, and De Frutos takes a huge risk. But he seems driven to show just how bad love can feel — to remind us how much Butterfly suffers when she kills herself. In his own parallel scenario, De Frutos is driven to kill his lover in order to rid himself of his own obsession.

The scene is deliberately brutal, but it's also one of the most unsullied portrayals of passion I have seen. It reveals that De Frutos is developing way beyond the charming and charismatic performer we've always known, into an an artist of real profundity and power.

First family of Albert Square

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

"*HOW* do you do? Who are you?" asked the Queen, meeting the cast of EastEnders a couple of weeks ago. As this candid woman explained, she did not watch soaps. They were on at the wrong time.

You tear your attention away with a noise like Velcro from what it is she always does at 7.30pm. She could tape them — or, more precisely, she couldn't. She was once reported as saying that she was always glad when Andrew came home because he was the only one who could programme the video.

She is not mechanically minded. I knew someone who served with her in the ATS during the war. The Royal Family arrived. As she stood beside her truck, the bonnet up, Princess Margaret peered into the engine and asked, "What's that?" "Shut up!" said Princess Elizabeth. Fifty years of being dragged around factories has done little to redress this.

Obviously I have a loyal duty to her and all of you who, reckless of whether you are getting up my nose or not, write, "Of course I don't have a television but . . ." Right. Well, then. Soaps.

The reigning family in EastEnders, ma'am, are the Bills. The Bills, who are not to be confused with The Bill, are related to everyone else in Albert Square the way all dukes are related to all other dukes. Ian Bill has gone to Italy to try to find his children.

Ian, despite his lack of inches and charisma, married the blindingly blonde and widely available Cindy. Spurning Ian and his fish-and-chip empire, Cindy has run away to Italy with their two sons, where she has struck up a warm friendship with a man of Mediterranean appearance.

Grant, Phil and a woman in a hat PHOTOMONTAGE: LIZ COULDWELL

All this will seem an implausible scenario to you, ma'am, but it's how people live in the East End (straight down The Mall and keep going past Coutts).

Normally I'd hesitate to recommend EastEnders to you, as it has a very low chuckle quotient. Puzzlingly low, as your typical cockney is well known for his chirpiness. I know the Royal Family enjoy a good, plain joke. As your Great Aunt Maud once said to Cecil Beaton, "We roared and we roared and we roared!" and the willowy photographer bent like a croquet hoop before the blast of her laughter.

This week things have gloriously improved. Phil 'n' Grant, either of whom could normally be mistaken for something lopping into a Canadian forest, have amazingly diversified into the broker's men in Babes In The Wood. If this double act is not deluged with panto offers, there's no justice in this world. With the sun bouncing blindingly off their polished skulls and their knuckles grazing the terrazzo, they have arrived in Italy ("Speaka da English!") to help Ian.

By a sort of natural attraction, they immediately gravitate to a punch-up with the locals ("Which one do you want?" "The little one.") As Grant said, when he regained consciousness in the nick, it made a nice change from home. This was not altogether true. It was exactly like home. Grant, as Phil pointed out, has the IQ of a banana.

Ian, supple as a moist ginger-snap, was relying on devious finagling to deceive Cindy, but that is not Phil 'n' Grant's style. "There's no guarantee she will see us." "Then we'll kick the door in." This simple ploy proves remarkably successful. Phil 'n' Grant snatch the children and make their escape, only slightly delayed when they try to find the airport by following the planes. "What if they're taking off and we land up in Switzerland?" "We find the ones that are landing 'ere." "Are you sure we're related?" Exeunt all, pursued by Cindy.

Where nature fights profit

Paul Evans


ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

AS NOVEMBER rain sweeps over Northumbria, the farmer of Deadwater Farm peers down the wet, misty valley, rubs his hands together and says, "Aye". This simple expression, part rueful sigh, part note of affirmation, speaks volumes of this landscape where the Cheviot hills of the Scottish Borders meet the Cumbrian fells, 30 miles north of Hadrian's Wall which separated England from Scotland in Roman times. In the pale winter light the landscape looks like the northern forests of Scandinavia or North America, but it's a fake. The 60,000 hectares of Keilder forest is the largest forestry plantation in England.

The land was acquired by the Forestry Commission from the Duke of Northumberland in lieu of death duties in 1924. The hills were then characterised by "mollinia prairies", great expanses of mountain grasslands grazed by sheep and heather moorland used for grouse shooting. The planting of sitka spruce began in the twenties but accelerated after the second world war to provide a strategic timber reserve.

Sitka spruce, *Picea sitchensis*, has a fairly limited range of distribution in the wild and extends from Alaska's Kodiac Island to Mendocino County, California, in a narrow strip along the Pacific coast. Sitka spruce became the boon of British foresters because of its adaptability to our cool, damp conditions and its phenomenally rapid growth. From the 1920s onwards, sitka was planted by the hundred million to become the main plantation forest tree in much of Britain. Hills became dense, dark plantations.

In recent years the battle between traditional foresters and conservationists has begun to swing in favour of a more diverse forest managed for many purposes other than crop production. At Keilder forest, where roaming is encouraged, forest management balances leisure activities and nature conservation against the need to produce toilet paper and other timber products.

The forest is being restructured to produce a variety of habitats. In the 10,000 hectares of unplanted land are some of Britain's rarest habitats, the Border Mires: a variety of upland bogs containing rare and endangered species such as northern spike rush and northern eggar moth. Streamsides are being left to regenerate naturally, and large areas of native broadleaved trees are gradually replacing the wall-to-wall sitka spruce slums in some areas. More scots pine is planted to benefit red squirrels — Keilder is one of their last strongholds in England. This diversity has encouraged wildlife, and a dramatic increase in raptors such as hen harriers, goshawks and tawny owls bears witness to the thriving populations of prey species.

The hills around Keilder were once a lawless frontier with a landscape to match. Before the Duke of Northumberland's ancestors covered them with sheep and grouse, they were wild lands of birch wood, mire and moorland. The fragments that remain and the clues left in peat deposits are the keys to understanding what kind of forest might emerge in the future. Although sitka spruce will remain the dominant crop, gradually the ancient forest is beginning to reassert itself. This cold, wet, windswept place is also a frontier where the wild struggles against the need for profits: a struggle that these hills have known for centuries, "Aye".

Chess Leonard Barden

BRITAIN'S **low-cost master tournaments in the past two years have proved fine value for money and are developing a whole new generation of young talents.**

Last month's all-play-alls at University College School, Hampstead, north London, were organised by Adam Raoof with the help of the BCF's international director David Sedgwick, and produced a record GM norm, an IM title, and more evidence of 13-year-old Luke McShane's promise.

Jonathan Rowson, aged 20, won, and thereby became the youngest Scot to score a grandmaster result. The Oxford economics student, silver medallist in the European junior, beat McShane when both needed 1½/2 for the norm, but the schoolboy finished joint second and his Fide world rating is now close to 2500, GM standard.

Luke plays in next month's Hastings Premier, a year younger than Nigel Short's debut in this famous event. GMs at Hastings seeking a weak spot in McShane's game may home in on his predictable repertoire on the white side of the Sicilian, as the well-primed Rowson did in the Hampstead decider.

McShane v Rowson

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 Nf6 4 Nc3 cxd4 5 Nxd4 Nc6 6 Be3 e6 7 f3 Be7 8 Qd2 0-0 9 0-0-0 a6 10 g4 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 b5 12 h4 Bb7 13 g5 Nd7 14 Kb1 Rc8 15 Qg2?! Kasparov won twice as Black in this line last year, and in the present game Black's attack also proves faster. 15 a3 is better here to stop Black's reply.

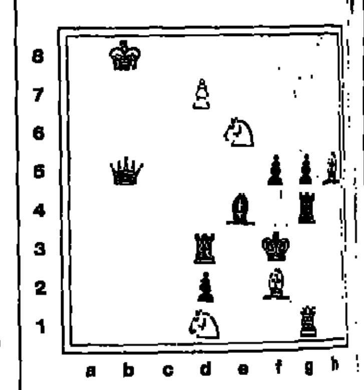
b4 16 Ne2 Qc7 17 Nc1 Ne5! The N looks a target for White's advancing pawns, but will expose weaknesses at c2 and h1. **18 f4 Ng6 19 Be3 d5 20 Qf2 dxe4 21 h5 Nxf4! 22 Bxf4 e3 23 Qh2 e2!** Regaining material, and disorganising White's army. **24 Bxe2 Qxc2+ 25 Ka1 Bxh1 26 Qxh1 Qf5!** The key, foreseen five moves earlier, which stops White consolidating.

27 Nd3 Rfd8 28 Qb7 Bxg5 29 Bc7 29 Bxg5 holds out longer. **Qd5! 30 Qb6 Rd7 31 Bg3 Qg2 32 Bf2 Qe4** Rxd3! 33 Bxd3 Qf3 34 Bc2 Qxd1+ is a quicker win. **33 Re1 Rxd3 34 Bxd3 Qxd3 35 Qxb4 Qd2 36 Resigns.**

● **Rotary International is again sponsoring the UK Schools Challenge, in which more than 24,000 children played last year. Early rounds can be run by teachers or parents with little or no knowledge of the game, and lead on to area and national finals. Every school in Britain has been invited to take part.**

For more details, call (+44) (0)181-397 1826 or write to 7 Billockby Close, Chessington, Surrey KT9 2ED.

No 2499



White mates in two moves, against any defence (by J Warton, 1926). This baffled many experts at a British Rapidplay Championship due to White's variety of choice.

No 2498: 1 g4! Nxg4 2 Nxg4 hxg4 3 h5 wins a rook, so Black must play 1 . . . f5 2 g5! when the rook is imprisoned and Qc3, Ra8, Qb8, and Rcc8 is a winning attack.

Quick crossword no. 393

Across

1 Firework (7,4)
9 Force, compel (9)
10 Draw — an item of neckwear (3)
11 Japanese fish dish, cold (6)
13 Publicity material (7)
14 In good health (6)
15 Large prawns (6)
18 Site of massacre of the Macdonalds (7)
20 Less (5)
21 Goal — point (3)
22 For that reason (9)
24 Centrally placed (2,3,6)

Down

2 Vase for ashes (3)
3 One who loves his country (7)
4 Almost (6)
5 Military officers holding power (5)
6 Those in charge of cows (9)
7 Fools around (4,3,4)
8 London borough (11)
12 Political leader (9)
16 Entrust — praise (7)
17 Save (6)
19 Capture (5)
23 Lubricating liquid (3)

Last week's solution

Bridge Zia Mahmood

THE quarter-finals of the World Championships in the lovely setting of Hammamet in Tunisia produced the most exciting day's play in bridge history.

When the final 16 deals began, the margin in no fewer than five of the eight matches (four in the Open championships, four in the Ladies) was a single-figure number of IMPs. Norway, who had been a long way behind the European champions Italy at the halfway stage, produced a magnificent comeback to win by 12 IMPs.

In the match between France (the Olympic Open champions) and Poland, the lead changed hands no fewer than nine times before the French pulled away at the end. The US ladies team, the current Olympic champions, overcame a deficit of 51 IMPs at half-time to defeat Canada by just two.

My own team was locked in a fascinating struggle with China, who had played superbly and been the most polite and charming opponents I have encountered at this level of the game. Though we eventually prevailed and advanced to the semi-final, it was one of the toughest matches in which I have ever been involved.

To give you some idea of what we were up against, look at this defensive problem faced by the Chinese East-West pair. First of all, you have to select an opening lead when your hand at favourable vulnerability is:

♠QJ ♥976 ♦K9864 ♣1083

and the bidding is:

South	West	North	East
Deutsch	Li	Soloway	Wang
		1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

With hearts and spades likely to be breaking favourably for the opponents, there is a case for attacking with a diamond. But that would not have succeeded in this case, as you can see from the full deal shown above right.

Li for China found the only lead to give the defence a chance — he started with the three of clubs. In the blink of an eye, East won with the queen, cashed the ace and led a third round of the suit. Seymon Deutsch won with dummy's king and led a spade, but East made no mistake. He went up with the ace and played a fourth round of clubs, promoting a second trump trick for his partner and defeating the contract.

North
♠ 10653
♥ AKQJ2
♦ Q
♣ K54

West
♠ QJ
♥ 976
♦ K9864
♣ 1083

East
♠ A2
♥ 1053
♦ 1075
♣ AQ972

South
♠ K9874
♥ 84
♦ AJ32
♣ J6

At the other table, the bidding was identical and the American West also found a club lead, selecting the eight. East won the queen and cashed the ace, on which West followed with the three as if he had begun with a doubleton. East, temporarily deceived as West had intended him to be, continued with a third round of clubs. Now the defence was able to arrange the same trump promotion as Wang and Li had contrived, so the contract was one down in this room also. Just another flat board!

Orhan Pamuk . . . 'radical reader' PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER

Satire is sacred

Orhan Pamuk, Turkey's best-selling author, talks to **Maya Jaggi**

"*I READ* a book one day and my whole life was changed", begins The New Life, by Turkish literary sensation Orhan Pamuk. The novel's 20-year-old narrator becomes obsessed and transformed by a book whose contents are never revealed. When the novel came out in Turkey, readers rang Pamuk's publishers to ask the title of the miraculous work that could change their lives.

The author of the fastest-selling book in Turkish history is amused by this irony over a novel that is itself about reading. He also confesses to a sense of guilt. Published in Turkish three years ago, The New Life has sold 200,000 copies — a record in a country which "lacks a reading tradition". Inspired to some extent by Dante's La Vita Nuova, it attracts not only "the intellectual, who reads it in the way an international readership would", but "a strange, cult reader, who wants to see what is this book, and has expectations that a new life will be revealed in it".

Pamuk, aged 45, in London to launch the translation, says: "I've always had this naive — sometimes angry — reader in Turkey, and had a sense of guilt for being post modern, or obscure, and not satisfying them in the way they wanted to be satisfied. Yet my book is not a map that instructs about the world, but an experience in itself."

Since Pamuk won acclaim abroad, he has drawn comparisons with Kafka, Calvino, Kundera, Eco, Borges, Garcia Márquez and Rushdie — though to him this is as unsatisfactory as "describing a new fruit as somewhere between a peach and an orange". The White Castle (1985) was an East-West *doppelgänger* novel set in 17th century Istanbul, while his metaphysical thriller The Black Book (1990), which sold 100,000 copies in Turkey, trawled shifting personal and national identities, reflecting the country's liminal status.

Pamuk began The New Life in Australia, during a bout of jet-lag-induced insomnia (Oliver Sacks in the next room suggested a sleeping pill). He describes its student hero as "semi-autobiographical". Like the narrator Osman (who uses the pseudonym Orphan Panic), Pamuk studied architecture at Istanbul Technical University, and after dropping out to write ("A screw was loose in my head"), lived with his divorced mother while trying in vain for eight years to find a publisher.

"I was a real radical reader, expecting books to open up a new world. But, distancing myself from my hero, I was also a cautious, ironic reader; in that sense I don't have radical ideas or expectations of a millennium. If I were exposed to any book as much as my hero, I'd find an antidote, which makes me a rare thing," he laughs, "a liberal in the Middle East".

Other obsessive readers suffer broken lives, or risk being killed. "All my friends burned their fingers, even destroyed their lives, expecting that much from books," says Pamuk. Though most of his peers from a secular, middle-class background were radical leftists, he says his critique applies as much to fundamentalists, to fiction as much as political tracts — sacred texts both secular and religious.

In the story's hilarious satire, an Islamic doctor wages an "all-out battle against printed matter", seeing books as part of the Western conspiracy "erasing our collective memory".

Pamuk, who says he was the first defender of The Satanic Verses in any Muslim country, concedes that the Salman Rushdie affair may have influenced the novel "unconsciously". But he adds: "In my part of the world, there are so many Rushdie-like cases. The Turkish state is one of the greatest violators of freedom of expression, comparable to Nigeria or China."

Pamuk, who has been outspoken on human rights in Turkey, particularly on behalf of the Kurds, nevertheless balks at a simple political reading of his novel. As for censorship's possible constraints: "It's not like Soviet Russia; you don't have to use allegories. You can't criticise the Turkish army or Ataturk, or be sexually explicit. But 99 per cent of writers in jail in Turkey are political writers or journalists, not novelists."

The New Life is also a kind of metaphysical road novel, taking the hero and his beloved Janan across provincial Turkey, where yoghurt vendors vie with Coca-Cola stalls.

For Turkey, says Pamuk, this conflict between Westernisers and Islamicists is more a lifestyle than a debate. "Turkey decided to be Westernised 200 years ago, and it's still in the process. Most of the country's struggles are located around that. In my book I wanted to turn them into a game, looking at them with irony."

The New Life is published by Faber at £14.99

Reading's seductive power

George Steiner

The Reader
by Bernhard Schlink
translated by Carol Brown Janeway
Weidenfeld & Nicolson
216pp £12.99

BOOK-REVIEWING can be a somewhat bleak trade. As a caustic French maxim puts it: "Bad books are merely the death of good trees." In which case, deforestation is constant. The infrequent bonus is the arrival, almost unheralded, of a masterly work. Then, the reviewer's sole and privileged function is to say as loudly as he is able, "Read this" and "Read it again".

Bernhard Schlink is professor of law at the University of Berlin. He is the author of three crime novels. I know nothing further about him. Or rather, I sense that I now know a great deal. Though the conjecture may be erroneous, it is also compelling. In essence, The Reader strikes one as somehow autobiographical, yet it has the force, the honest immediacy of the anonymous.

Convention has it that reviewers should not disclose the elements of plot-resolution. But in Schlink's very compact novel, really an extended novella in the tradition of Kleist or Schnitzler, the springing of the trap, deft as it is, hardly matters. The utter humanity of the tale, the depth of its implications, do not depend on the final twist.

The initiation of Michael, the German schoolboy, by Hanna, the rough-edged woman 20 years his senior, is narrated with erotic tact of the most intense kind. It looks back, with forgiving irony, on countless such episodes in the German *Bildungsroman*, in those recollections of sexual discovery and bitter-sweet ripening which adorn German fiction from Goethe to Thomas Mann. Two aspects give to Michael's rite of passage, to the love-making and inevitable quarrels, a particular aura. There is blackness gathering in Germany, and the bond between the woman and the boy is bookish. Michael reads to Hanna from the German classics. The intensity of her listening, her hunger for these canonic works, is inwoven with her seductiveness. Moreover it affords the insecure youth a certain counter-poise, a terrain on which he can hold his own: "As the days grew longer, I read longer, so that I could be in bed with her in the twilight. When she had fallen asleep lying on top of me . . . and a blackbird was singing as the colours of things in the kitchen dimmed until nothing remained of them but lighter and darker shades of grey, I was completely happy." (Carol Brown Janeway's translation has precisely the necessary note of tense clarity.)

Hanna vanishes abruptly out of the city and Michael's maturing existence. He becomes a lawyer. With the end of the war, his appalled spirit turns to the question of guilt, of the monstrous evidence of Nazi inhumanity. He is an observer at one of the war-crimes trials. Among the defendants is (of course) Hanna. The evidence against her is damning, as is her silence in the face of her accusers. She has been at work in a bestial enterprise and is incarcerated for long years. She has recognised, but not acknowledged, Michael's presence during the court hearings. Her cruel secret has been revealed: Hanna is illiterate. And now the relations between initiator and initiated are reversed. Michael reads great texts into his tape recorder. The tapes are brought to the prisoner. She is being taught to read and write. Somewhat uncouth but shrewd verdicts on the tapes re-establish contact. For Michael, "Reading aloud was my way of speaking to her, with her."

The day of Hanna's release is at hand; Michael will guide her first steps into an altered world (but has the savagery at the heart of the German condition truly altered?). The day before liberation, Frau Schmitz hangs herself. Literacy has made remembrance unendurable. In Hanna's cell, Michael finds books by Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel and Jean Amery, the eminent witnesses and victims of the death camps. This may be the only forced touch in Schlink's novel. It hardly matters.

The Reader has already appeared, or is to appear, in a dozen languages, including Turkish and Catalan. It is rapidly becoming a touchstone of moral literacy — the whole concept of the "literate" is the crux — throughout Europe. Should it fail to achieve this status in Britain, the provinciality, the trivialisation of major issues which seem to characterise so much of the current climate, notably in the novel, would indeed be worse than one fears. Schlink reads his readers like a gentle laser. Of how many recent books can we say that?

Curing the baby blues

Lucy Atkins

Ghost Children
by Sue Townsend
Methuen 192pp £12.99


Sue Townsend . . . emotional impact PHOTOGRAPH: JANE BOWN

***GHOST CHILDREN* opens with a gruesome image of loss: a sack of aborted foetuses is dumped on urban scrubland. This may seem shocking, coming from the creator of Adrian Mole, but despite her cosy image as an unchallenging writer with a gift for comedy, Sue Townsend has never been shy of overtly political subject matter — be it the Queen living in a council estate or the lot of the Asian working-class woman in Leicester. This novel, undiluted by populism, mixes dour social comment and domestic comedy, to expose the unfulfilled longing at the heart of modern British life.**

The plot is, initially, mundane. Angela and Christopher were young lovers, until Angela, at the last minute, aborted the baby which Christopher so wanted. Now, 17 years on and nine stones heavier, Angela is married to Gregory, a small-minded man she does not love; she works in a travel agency and stuffs herself with pick 'n' mix sweets to fill the void in her loveless, childless life.

Christopher, too, is lonely; living with his dog on a modern housing estate, single and unemployed following a breakdown, he collects rare books and longs for children. Early one morning, Christopher and his dog find the bag of foetuses, and this discovery unleashes in Christopher the desire to know what really happened to the baby he and Angela almost had. He tracks her down, and finds that he still loves her, but Angela, although prepared to leave her husband, has been sterilised. Their longing for a family then begins to focus on a young, disenfranchised couple, Crackle and Tamara, drug-addicted Satanists, and their neglected toddler, Storme: a dysfunctional family who personify the bleak landscape of concrete tower-blocks and modern shopping centres in which the novel is set.

The comedy emerges through characterisation: each individual is a recognisable comic "type" but Townsend explores the world from each of their perspectives. This technique is engrossing and often amusing, but it also has pitfalls. There is not enough space to explore each character in depth, and so, frequently, enough information is given to make a character individual, but not enough to make them believable.

But those characters who do develop more fully are memorable and moving. When Christopher takes a foetus from the bag, carries it home, cuddles and names it, before burying it under his patio, he looks set to become a typical fictional inadequate, yet he unfolds as tender and nurturing; a man who wants a wife and child to care for, but who is also angry at his lost opportunities, and dynamic enough to try to change his life. The novel ends in a seamless reconciliation of parts which is at once cosy and ominous. What this ending lacks in credibility, it makes up for in emotional impact.

Dali's surreal talent to abuse

Barry Ife

The Shameful Life of Salvador Dali
by Ian Gibson
Faber & Faber 764pp £30

IN 1953, the Catalan art critic Sebastia Gasch published an appreciation of Dali, whom he had first met in 1926. Writing without rancour, Gasch gave his former friend the hardest of edges: muscular; jet-black hair, straight and brilliantined; waxen face; sinister smile; sharp teeth. In conversation he was cogent, impassive, and cruel. "Everything that Dali said and did revealed a complete lack of heart. In him sensitivity was totally absent."

This glacial image, which Dali himself liked to promote, presents a formidable obstacle for a biographer, but Ian Gibson's magnificent re-appraisal goes behind the surface cruelty in an attempt to understand the origins of Dali's complex and flawed genius. Gibson would have been hard-pressed to make Dali a likeable man, but he succeeds in showing that there is a lot more to him than the shallow exhibitionism which came to dominate Dali's later career.

For Gibson, the key to Dali's personality is "shame". This, he argues, is a rare emotion in Spain, which is perhaps another way of saying that "shame" and "shameful" are not quite the words he is looking for. Dali's problem started at primary school in his native Figueres, taking the form of shyness, frequent blushing, and embarrassment at his own gaucheness. As he got older his feelings of inadequacy became crippling; he compensated by striking dandified poses, but socially and sexually he remained an impotent outsider. He confessed to deep anxieties about the size of his penis and fears that he would never be able to make a woman "creak like a watermelon", a bizarre concept he picked up from a pornographic novel.



Dali: a fearsome intelligence beneath a cruel exterior

Dali consoled himself with frequent bouts of compulsive masturbation, but they only sharpened his sense of guilt, and when Lorca tried to seduce him he was both flattered and tempted, which only made things worse. In the event, a mutual friend, Margarita Manso, acted as a willing surrogate; but Dali was left wondering whether he was a latent homosexual and whether he would ever be able to make love to a woman. Fortunately, Gala burst into his life in 1929 with technique enough for both of them.

But how does all this help us with the paintings? As Gibson implies, it helps us to understand why Dali was the first serious artist in history to make onanism one of the principal themes of his work. And it helps us to interpret those profoundly disturbing works of the late 1920s which explore Dali's sexual anxieties, paintings such as Gadget And Hand (1927), The Bather (1928), and The Great Masturbator (1929). But not all spoilt, bashful, self-abusing adolescents grow into great artists. What were the origins of Dali's particular talent? For an answer we have to look closely at Dali's upbringing in Catalonia, and his formative years in Madrid and Paris. More than half the book is taken up with this groundwork, and it shows Gibson at his best, full of telling detail and assiduous research, painstakingly decoding and correcting Dali's own semi-fictional autobiography, The Secret Life (1942). What emerges is a picture of a sensitive young man from a comfortable family; much influenced by his native landscape and by exposure to the Old Masters; encouraged in his early impressionism by an established painter, Ramon Pichot; and driven by a precocious desire for fame.

From Figueres, Dali went to Madrid to the liberal Residencia de Estudiantes, and the Academy of San Fernando — from which he got himself expelled in 1926. No one is better than Gibson at conveying the sheer excitement of the intellectual life of Madrid in the 1920s. At the Residencia, Dali read Freud, and met Lorca and Buñuel. The friendship with Lorca was crucial to the clarification of Dali's artistic agenda. Lorca recognised and celebrated the painter's need for precision, for a place "where there is no room for dreams or their inexact flora".

Dali responded with a prose piece on the theme of Saint Sebastian, and with Neo-Cubist Academy (1926), a subtle recognition of his own that their friendship was an attraction of opposites. Gibson's reading of this picture is one of many highlights in his account of Dali's intellectual development. But the friendship would not last. By the time Lorca published the Gypsy Ballads in 1928, Dali was already too much of a surrealist to appreciate them, and was ready to move on to Paris, to collaboration with Buñuel, America, and the life-long attachment to Gala.

Dali used Lorca and Buñuel as he later used countless other people who crossed his path. But in these formative years, at least, the conflict was productive as well as painful. Behind Dali's surface cruelty lay a fearsome intelligence, for which Ian Gibson, in this compelling account, is more than a match.

If you would like to order a copy of this book at the special price of £25 contact CultureShop (see page 37)

Rebel without a pause

Laura Cumming

Alfred C Kinsey: A Public/Private Life
by James H Jones
Norton 938pp £28

ALFRED KINSEY was the man in the white coat who set out to research America's sexual habits from the bike-shed to the bedroom and discovered that his compatriots strayed into the farmyard as well. His notorious report, published in 1949, revealed to a stunned nation that the only sex it sanctioned, marital intercourse, was merely one of at least 57 varieties. Indeed men were far more likely to masturbate than sleep with their wives and often preferred prostitutes, other men and — occasionally — sheep.

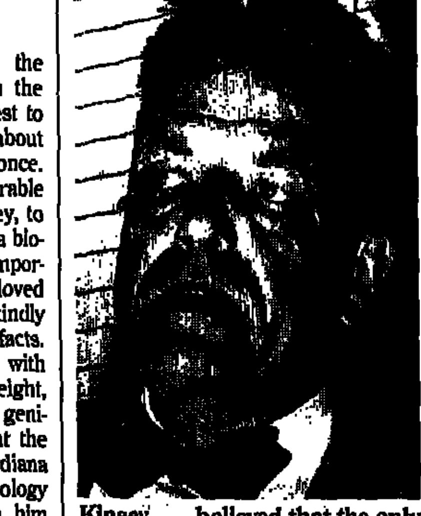
From barbershop to boardroom, America talked of nothing else. Headlines ricocheted, stage shows were written, Mae West saucily challenged the author to a "battle of the figures". Church fulminated and science deplored — but everyone bought the book. Kinsey had told the nation its own secrets. He wanted, he said, to set society free. What he did not confide were any secrets of his own. These are revealed for the first time in James Jones's biography, and they make his book as shocking as The Kinsey Report.

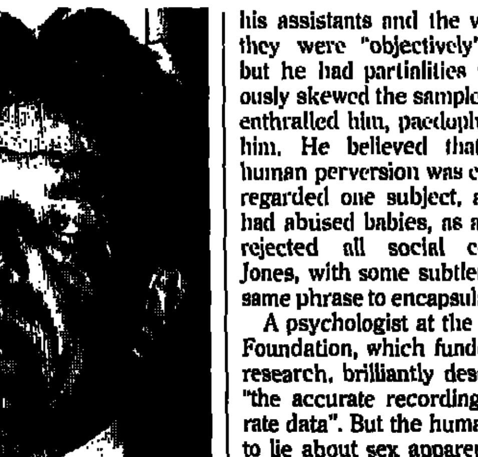
Jones is everything his subject was not: humorous, patient, compassionate and moral. Like the heroic boy with his finger in the dike, he does his touching best to prevent the hideous truth about Kinsey from flooding out at once. Pages are devoted to his miserable Methodist youth in New Jersey, to his extraordinary diligence as a biologist and hillwalker, to his important discoveries about the unloved gall wasp. But even this kindly camouflage cannot conceal the facts.

Alfred Kinsey was obsessed with sex from the tenderest age. At eight, he was examining other boys' genitals, at 12, flashing his own at the YMCA. During his career at Indiana University, he forced his entomology assistants to masturbate with him and his sex researchers to couple in public as extra-curricular duty. He swapped his wife so often for "scientific" purposes that it is amazing he didn't mislay her altogether.

Kinsey gave Clara a compass and some hiking boots as a wedding present. It is a pity she didn't use them to escape. The honeymoon was spent struggling through blizzards and dining on Kinsey's appalling nutrition packs, prunes pre-pitted to save on weight. Later, this monstrous scientist would volunteer his wife for gynaecological experiments. Jones interviewed her before she died and she was loyal. But he gently suggests that Kinsey's death was a relief.

Alarmingly, Kinsey got into sex research by starting a campus marriage course. Perhaps the senior common room didn't know he had a fetish for whips.





Kinsey . . . believed that the only human perversion was celibacy

Students came for advice and left behind their sexual histories, which Kinsey catalogued as he did the private lives of wasps. Science, after all, had to get the story straight: how sharp was this man's penis, how sharp his sexual response? As the survey grew, Kinsey tumbled his hobby into both job and blow-job.

The reason Kinsey's private life matters rather more than a wasp's is that it corrupts his research over 20 years. Not only did he have sex with his assistants and the very people they were "objectively" studying, but he had partialities which seriously skewed the sample. Rent boys enthralled him, paedophiles moved him. He believed that the only human perversion was celibacy and regarded one subject, a man who had abused babies, as a rebel who rejected all social conventions. Jones, with some subtlety, uses the same phrase to encapsulate Kinsey.

A psychologist at the Rockefeller Foundation, which funded Kinsey's research, brilliantly described it as "the accurate recording of inaccurate data". But the human tendency to lie about sex apparently did not occur to Kinsey, perhaps because his sexual practices were so extreme.

As Jones shows, Kinsey was subversively rooting for social reform. He loved it when a defendant was excused for abusing a pig because his lawyer persuasively quoted from Kinsey. He wanted his readers to know that whatever they did, they had safety in numbers. They believed him and wrote intimate letters back, many of which Jones quotes.

Thus you might argue that it doesn't matter if Kinsey perverted the research; thus that a generation of perverts was born. By writing what is both a biography of Kinsey and of pre-war America, Jones allows you to make up your mind. Without being sensationalist, this is a sensational book.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

The Penguin History of Europe, by J M Roberts (Penguin, £11.99)

BORING, I thought as I lifted the book off the shelf, which just goes to show that you should not judge a book by its cover or its title. There are quite a few one-volume mega-histories about that are little more than dull and worthy catalogues; this, though, has an almost Gibbonian drive and sweep, and a stylistic command which makes a compelling narrative of thousands of years-worth of fascinating stuff.

Anyway, this is the book you can use to beat those about the head who refer disdainfully to certain parts of the curriculum as the study of "Dead White European Males": for the history of Europe is very much the history of the world. In short, this satisfies: satisfies historical curiosity and a sense of judiciousness.

Roberts's watchword is caution in exposition and analysis, and yet he manages, without having to resort to pyrotechnics, to make every sentence interesting. It's a vindication of the power of simple, straightforward prose, with none of the gee-whiz graphic gimmickry that afflicts so many historical books.

About Modern Art, by David Sylvester (Pimlico, £12.50)

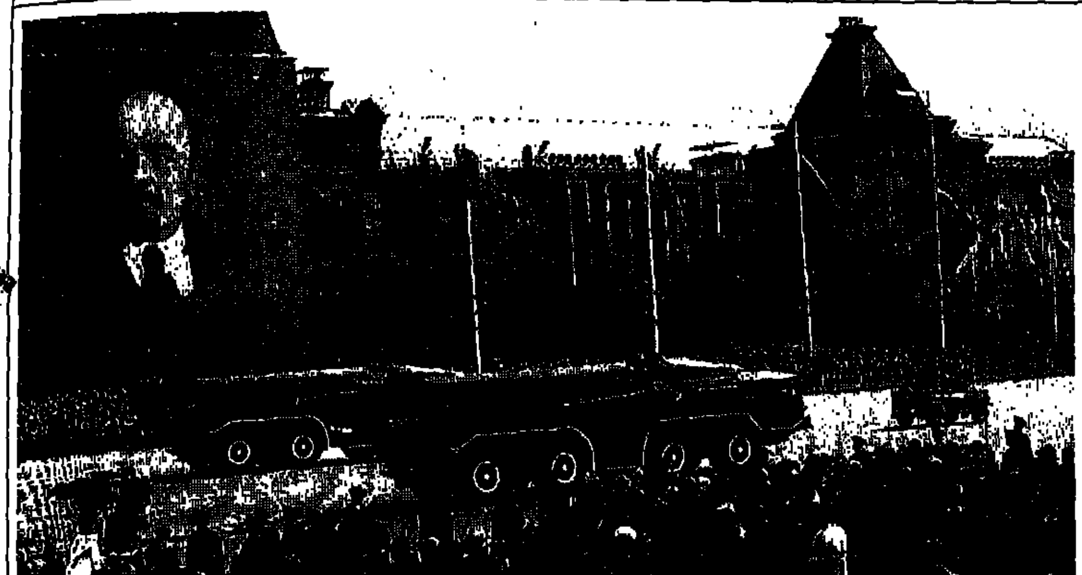
IT IS received opinion that Sylvester is "the best living writer in English about modern art" (Lord Gowrie's opinion), but this collection would appear to undermine it. A 1948 essay on Klee recalls Empson's remarks on art-catalogue prose ("an iron-hard jet of absolutely total nonsense"); in 1995 Gilbert and George's Naked Sh[illegible] Pictures "are glimpses of the emptiness of existence after the death of God". Has a more banal judgment appeared in print? It's not all bad. Some pictures might have helped.

Fragments: Cool Memories III, 1991-95, by Jean Baudrillard (Verso, £12)

THE best way of absorbing Baudrillard's thought is to read these aphorisms, or, I suppose, pensées; more than half of what he has to say here is superb, right on the nail ("Servility is the fuel of power, and arrogance is its lubricant"); but much of the rest too cruelly exposes his thought processes as quotidian or just plain wrong. In fact, this has the pleasant effect of making him less strange or intimidating to Anglo-Saxon scepticism. There is the problem of his occasional, and quite disgusting sexism, but what else would you expect from a bloody Frog? Er, let me rephrase that.

The Diary of a Young Girl, by Anne Frank, trs Susan Massotty, int Elie Wiesel (Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics, £5.99)

THE definitive edition, 50 years after its first publication; restored here are passages in which Frank writes about sex, how much she dislikes her mother, and cutting portraits of her fellow hiders. It makes the contrast between her wonderfully expressed humanity — the ordinary concerns of a girl (who would also have become a talented writer had she lived) — and the inhumanity of the Nazis who eventually to kill her,, all the more startling and heartbreaking.



Soviet military might on display in Red Square under Gorbachev: was he the last useful idiot?

Upper Volta with rockets

Norman Stone

A History of Twentieth-Century Russia
by Robert Service
Penguin 654pp £25

WITH his new, long history of 20th century Russia, Robert Service attempts that difficult task — to get to the truth about communism. He goes about as far as we can, given the present state of knowledge, and as with all really useful historical books, this one can be given to an intelligent 15-year-old with instructions to get on with it.

He has coped manfully with a large literature. I might pick a quarrel or two over his bibliography: he ought to have included Vladimir Bukovsky's Jugement à Moscou, which shows, from Bukovsky's surreal experience in the innermost archives in 1993, that everything the Reaganites said about the Soviet Union was right, or even that they erred on the charitable side.

That book, and the also unnoticed works of a French Orwell, Alain Besançon, should have taken the place of old E H Carr. But there is still so much that we do not know, and in the present condition of archival research in Moscow, we may not get there any too soon.

For communism lied. It lied and lied and lied; the very initials USSR consisted, someone said, of four lies. A peculiarity of these lies was that you were not really expected to believe them. Official historians claimed this and that for the country's agriculture and industry, but no one inside the USSR believed them.

The hero of Service's pages is Gorbachev, and the book becomes more and more hectically readable the further you advance in that astonishing period, the eighties. But glasnost and perestroika were lies. Neither word was new; neither delivered what it claimed. Under the first, the intelligentsia were supposed to fill in "the blank spots of history". There were none: everyone knew about Stalin's monstrosities, and famous Western accounts of them, especially Robert Conquest's, were perfectly well known, as Conquest discovered when he finally went to Moscow.

Perestroika was another pack of lies. Service works hard to convince the reader that, at the end of Gorby's reign, this or that economic process was being seriously reformed, with some purported semi-demi-privatisation or other. You could gather nuts in May; you might even, wonder of wonders, have a joint venture with Western capital to export the nuts. Foreigners did put money in. Not many nuts were sold and there was a first-class economic crisis; but the money promptly poured out again, to Swiss or Cypriot banks, just as foreigners were being invited to invest more by way of charitable endeavour.

In the late Gorby period around $60 billion went to the Soviet Union, and not a cent has been recovered. Meanwhile grandchildren of the nomenklatura are in Oxford language schools. Where have they got the money, in a very poor country? Is it possible that Gorbachev was, in fact, the last useful idiot?

Certainly, the beneficiaries of his doings have not been the ordinary people of Russia, who, as Service powerfully says, have been having a very bad time, but the more adaptable and unscrupulous bits of the nomenklatura. Moscow, sown up by protection rackets, is now the second most expensive city in the world, although the country might rate as Upper Volta with rockets.

And yet Russia, in 1914, seemed to have an exceedingly bright future: she was billed as a soon-to-be world-class power. For her to end the century with a standard of living well below that of Turkey and an economy smaller than that of South Korea, says something resonant. Communism, although claimed to be the scientific, progressive movement of all time, eliminating all those horses, kings, peasants and priests, failed in everything, except perhaps for weapons production. Why did Russia get it, and why did it fail so badly there?

THE STORY that Service has to tell is surreal, and since he has much experience of Russia he knows instinctively how this fits in with the character of the country. However, British-fashion, he does seem to believe that communism, given goodwill, could be "reformed". From way back, the British took this line: Lloyd George thought that Russia, given trade links, would just produce a sort of fluffy version of Labour.

There is a rum book, the defector Anatoly Golitsyn's New Lies For Old (1983), which, universally decried except in Besançon-Bukovsky circles when it appeared, said that a KGB plot was going on. It would promote some new leader with a human face, talking what appeared to be straight language. It would go on about our common European home. It would junk the Marxist stuff. It would adopt Russian religion and restore Orthodox churches. It would get out of eastern Europe, and let the Germans be unified. In return, it would get a lot of money, Nato would be more or less emasculated, the Germans would be divided from their erstwhile allies, and Russia would then recover. Well? And?

The triumph of Will

James Wood

The Genius Of Shakespeare
by Jonathan Bate
Picador 386pp £20

COLERIDGE was not only the greatest critic of Shakespeare, he was the most visited by contradictory passions. Looking at the prose he wrote between 1808 and 1818 is like looking at the striped sediments of 400 years of British response to Shakespeare. Delightfully, Coleridge feels something different every hour. Shakespeare is for all time; but he is also the English national poet. It is a mistake to see him as a wild romantic genius; on the other hand, he could do no wrong — "he never introduces a word, or a thought, in vain or out of place". We must not venerate Shakespeare, so that he becomes "a sort of Grand Lama", whose "very excrements are prized as relics". But at the same time, he is beyond compare.

To many, Shakespeare is a Grand Lama with precious excrement. He is installed, by law, at the centre of the school curriculum; politicians sniff his texts for orderly aromas. To Prince Charles, English has been downhill since Shakespeare. In Britain, there will always be people gardening for lost ideological roots who pull up Shakespeare's characters at every turn. The patriots and priests of the emotions described by Coleridge are still alive. What has changed is that, at the end of the century, there is no one with Coleridge's indexical intelligence and enormous confidence ready to oppose the patriots. For good reasons — which have to do with the rise of new, more sceptical ways of reading texts — we no longer possess Coleridge's undisarrayed certainty that Shakespeare could never blot a line, that Shakespeare is obviously the greatest poet who ever lived, and that he is obviously for all times and all places — both a national and international poet.

We may believe these things, but only foolish people argue them. The usual opponents of the conservative patriots are a group of broadly deconstructive and historicist critics who argue that there is something called "the Shakespeare myth": that Shakespeare's plays are less (if at all) the product of a great genius, and more the product of the historical discourses in which those plays originated, and in which they are performed. Such critics pay attention to the way successive generations reinterpret Shakespeare. At their most extreme, they deny that Shakespeare's plays possess meanings of their own; it is we, goes this argument, who fill the empty house with different families of meaning.

Crudely put, these critics do not believe in the continuity of human nature (thus, it is no good arguing with them that Othello has appealed to people over the centuries because it says something true about sexual jealousy; for they do not agree that sexual jealousy has hardly changed); they believe in radical readers but not in radical texts (literature is essentially conservative despite its best efforts); they do not believe in the idea of the originating, intending author. Thus Shakespeare sometimes resembles a lumpy pantomime horse, with the conservative patriots bouncing at one end, and the leftish radicals pulling at the other. They deserve each other.

A clean, well-lighted space in the middle has existed for some time, but only now has it been properly filled. Jonathan Bate, the sanest and shrewdest scholar of Shakespeare at present, has written the just, liberal, unhostaged book that one has been waiting for. To readers of Bate's earlier books, and to anyone who has read much recent Shakespeare criticism, a lot of the material will be familiar. But this book, with its provocative title, is aimed at those ordinary, general readers whom the conservatives fear and the radicals disdain. Bate has nothing to lose from universal comprehension, and the prospect of the King Alfred Professor of English at Liverpool offering this franchise to non-specialists is moving.

Bate's position might be called radicalism softly rationalised. He believes in an intending author who, being a great poet, was not always at the mercy of Elizabethan ideologies. But he also stresses what was unoriginal in Shakespeare — how often he embroidered an inherited pattern, how collaborative was the Elizabethan theatre. He believes in radical texts, and shows how Shakespeare became one of the founders of German and French romanticism; and how, in this century, The Tempest inspired a Caribbean resistance to colonialism (a superb, archaeological discussion of Une Tempête, by the great Martinique poet Aimé Césaire). Yet at the same time, Bate is as attentive as any radical to the fluctuations of Shakespeare's stock: a large part of his book concerns the way in which, in the 1800s, Shakespeare began to be seen as "a genius".

Yet again, Bate believes in genius. It is not just ideological gauze to him. He thinks that there are reasons for Shakespeare's gradual ascension into the greatest figure in world literature. The patriots have no explanation for this, except the circularity of an undefined "greatness". The radicals too often sound as if it were all an uneasy hoax.

Here, Bate's book might be expected to stumble, for an account of what has made Shakespeare successful is hardly likely to be very novel. The "evolutionary potential of the plays is proof of their genius," says Bate. These plays have evolved because they can mean so many things to so many people. (Which doesn't mean that they have no meanings at all.) In his best chapter, Bate suggests that while we have always unconsciously known that Shakespeare's plays have a large, multi-vocal repertoire of meanings, we have only been able to admit to it since the 1920s, when William Empson told us it was good to cherish ambiguity. Only since then have we had the language to describe Shakespeare's largeness.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £16 contact CultureShop (see advert left).

Poacher, gamekeeper and lord of the manor: the man whose donation embarrassed Labour runs grand prix racing his own way, writes **Richard Williams**

On a fast track to wealth and power

FORMULA ONE is a world of clever people, and Bernie Ecclestone is the cleverest of them all. His unprepossessing title is vice-president in charge of promotional affairs for the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile, the sport's worldwide governing body. What he actually does is run grand prix racing.

Since he is both a senior executive of the FIA and chairman of the Formula One Constructors' Association, the body representing the competitors, and also chairman of something called Formula One Administration — a company which collects, divides and distributes the revenues from the circuit owners, race sponsors, television companies and trackside advertisers to whom, under a remarkable 25-year deal with the FIA, he is empowered to sell the rights to the world championship events — he is in a unique position: poacher, gamekeeper and lord of the manor too.

The arrangement goes unchallenged because it works so well, in the interests of so many parties. As far as the FIA is concerned, Ecclestone has raised Formula One to a position of pre-eminence virtually unimaginable before he became involved. To the constructors, he is the man whose subtle vision and tough deal-making made them part of the entertainment business, enabling the most successful of them to ride around in private jets and to contemplate the possibility of floating the whole circus on the stock market next spring, with an estimated value of more than $3 billion.

Like Fidel Castro, the 66-year-old Ecclestone seems likely to leave many devoted apparatchiks but no obvious successor. And, extending the analogy, there appears little likelihood of a voluntary retirement. His ambition is prodigious, matched only by his imagination. He is a complicated and subtle man who sometimes takes on a very different protective coloration.

He is the most easily identifiable figure in the paddock: no more than 5ft 4in tall, invariably wearing a crisp, open-necked white shirt and black trousers or, in moments of extreme relaxation, a pair of freshly laundered and perfectly tailored jeans, with polished black loafers. His long grey hair is neatly barbered, brushed into a fringe above eyes that convey the impression of careful appraisal.

At all the European grands prix he can usually be found in his mobile headquarters, the large trailer with tinted windows through which, unobserved, he can survey the paddock. Inside, where the influence is wielded and the deals are made, the furnishings and upholstery are grey, grey and grey again. Bernie's world is a place of logic and order. Nothing is allowed to disrupt this stark, rigorous aesthetic.

His origins are mysterious, a state of affairs which he has taken a mischievous pleasure in maintaining. He was born in Suffolk in 1931 but moved during childhood to Bexleyheath in the Kentish suburbs.

During the course of an interview in 1981 he told me that he had taken a degree in chemical engineering at Woolwich Polytechnic. He was already buying and selling motorbikes, he said, when he was 15, and worked briefly for a motorcycle dealer before going into partnership in a garage. After buying out his partner he built up the business until it became the third largest operation of its type in Britain.

It made him rich enough to indulge his fondness for motor sport, first racing motorbikes then competing in the tiny Formula Three cars of the early 1950s, alongside such rising stars as Stirling Moss and Peter Collins. He also met and befriended a young driver named Stuart Lewis-Evans. When an accident at Brands Hatch made Ecclestone reconsider his future as a driver, he began to follow Lewis-Evans around the circuits, watching him develop into a grand prix driver.

Ecclestone enjoyed his new role as travelling fan, but he wanted a greater involvement. A plan to build a team around Lewis-Evans perished along with the driver in the 1958 Moroccan Grand Prix. For a while he retreated back into business, expanding to include property development and a finance company. At some point he disposed of his businesses, which made him very wealthy indeed.

But his interest in racing remained keen, and while he was absent from the grand prix scene he used his time to run teams in other kinds of racing, notably motorbikes. In the 1970s, however, he found a replacement for Lewis-Evans in the Austrian driver Jochen Rindt, an aggressive and charismatic character who put the management of his career in Ecclestone's hands.

But towards the end of the 1970 season, when Rindt was about to win the world championship, he crashed badly during a practice session at Monza. Ecclestone, who was in the pits, broke through the cordon and ran down the track to the wrecked Lotus. By the time he arrived, Rindt had been taken away in an ambulance. Eventually Ecclestone reached the hospital but Rindt was already dead.

This second tragedy did not deter Ecclestone. A year later, he bought the entire assets of the troubled Brabham team, spent a lot of money on new cars and drivers, including Graham Hill, and waited for their fortunes to turn. In 1974, after Hill had left to start his own team, a young Brazilian, Carlos Pace, joined Brabham and accepted the friendship previously enjoyed by Lewis-Evans and Rindt. The team won three grands prix, and Martini offered substantial sponsorship for the following season. Although Pace was killed in a light-plane accident in 1977, their racing fortunes continued to improve. With new backing from Parmalat, the giant Italian milk-products concern, the team won the titles of 1981 and 1983 with another young Brazilian, Nelson Piquet.

The Brabham factory shared premises with the Formula One Constructors' Association, also run by Ecclestone. In exchange for a licence fee, FOCA had been given the rights to run and promote the Formula One world championship series and Ecclestone employed a team of people to that end, as well as to administer the business of transporting 50 cars, 600 people and 90 tons of freight around the world in jumbo jets.



Bernie Ecclestone last week trying to keep the press at bay after denying that his £1 million contribution to Labour had anything to do with tobacco sponsorship of motor racing PHOTOGRAPH PAUL HACKETT

He was already distributing the income and prize fund according to an arcane and highly secret formula.

This method, in a simplified and less secretive form, is still in use today; its benign effect is to assist the continuity of Formula One by helping small teams such as Tyrrell and Minardi through lean periods. Thus, in this most high capitalist of sports, is the immediate impact of market forces gently mitigated.

BY THE end of the 1980s, after winning a series of bitter battles with the FIA, Ecclestone had grown more interested in running Formula One than in running a team, and the name and effects of the Brabham concern were sold. Now absorbed into the FIA and sitting as a member of its World Council, he was in a perfect position to expand the audience and raise the profile of Formula One, signing deals for live television transmission around the world and thereby making the sport attractive to a growing number of international companies with marketing budgets big enough to commit themselves to multi-million dollar sponsorship deals.

His associate, Paddy McNally, concentrated on maximising the income from trackside advertising through a company called Allsports Management. He developed the Paddock Club concept, enabling companies to buy corporate entertainment packages at each grand prix, giving their clients and favoured employees a treat in gigantic white marquees staffed by uniformed attendants serving champagne and canapés at a cost to the purchaser, in the mid-1990s, of about $1,500 a head.

Ecclestone's other close collaborator, the lawyer Max Mosley, who had been one of the original partners behind the March racing team in the early 1970s and then became FOCA's lawyer, eventually won an election campaign for the FIA presidency, giving the trio a practically unbreakable grip on the power over Formula One, and control of the proceeds that came from it.

The success of this enterprise can be gauged by the fact that, in the 1993-94 financial year, Bernie Ecclestone drew a salary of £50 million, the highest recorded in Britain. The following year's figure was down by $500,000. And the year after that he gave himself the biggest pay cut ever awarded, reducing his income to a mere $1 million: a 98 per cent reduction, reflecting his personal investment, believed to have been around $68 million, in the resources necessary to get Formula One's involvement in digital television off the ground.

Ecclestone loves making deals, he loves the game of manipulation, and most people in the paddock — even those earning salaries comparable to his — are, in some respect, frightened of him. He can seem brusque and abrasive, but there is another side to his exercise of power. You don't have to go far to find someone, perhaps a mechanic or a motor-home driver, who has reason to be grateful for his practical generosity during a difficult time: an introduction, a paddock pass, a helpful word when a team has gone belly-up. This doesn't make him Mother Teresa, but does help explain the longevity of his remarkable reign.

Extracted from Racers by Richard Williams (Viking, £16.99)

Nothing to fear but FIA itself

Paul Hayward reflects on the penalty meted out to Michael Schumacher

MICHAEL Schumacher's career was involved in a low-speed collision near Heathrow airport in London las week with the men who run Formula One. He emerged unscathed but the authority and integrity of F1 were a write-off.

Now that he has escaped both a fine and a suspension for trying to ram Jacques Villeneuve off the track in Jerez last month it can be only a matter of time before the Dukes of Hazzard start up an F1 team. According to the 24-man World Motorspo Council, Schumacher's actions were "deliberate but not premedi tated" and he is free to zoom in the 1998 season as hot favouri to win the drivers' championship. Laugh? I nearly crashed.

A surge of disillusionment wi be felt by anyone with the vaguest notion of what sport is supposed to be about. Schumacher's sentence, or lack of it, is the biggest demonstration of cynical pragmatism in modern sporting times.

When Mike Tyson's boxing licence was revoked after his attack on Evander Holyfield on pay-per-chew TV it was widely assumed he would be given it back after standing in a corner for a year. But at least Tyson wa taken out of the game. Schumacher's only punishment is to lose his runner-up spot from th season just passed. He hates fi ishing second anyway, so the council was doing him a favour.

Deep down it probably wante to throw the book at him but the logic of the box office said no. A three-race ban would have kill the start of the 1998 season be cause a grand prix without Schumacher would be like La without the king.

That does not mean the audi ence have to accept it. A three-race public boycott might be a suitable response, though the number of fans willing to observe it would probably cram into a mini-car.

Destroying the logic of the Schumacher verdict would no stretch the analytical powers of toddler. "Deliberate" is fine, apparently, but "premeditated" would have landed him in real trouble. Is the difference real so big?

Schumacher's ram-raid on the title was deemed serious enou for him to be thrown out of the 1997 championship but insuffi ciently grave for him to be penalised for 1998. This is wha is known in the trade as design justice.

The good news, for those con cerned about reckless driving that Schumacher has agreed to participate next year in a road safety campaign with the FIA and European Commission; motor racing's equivalent of community service. Presuma the book he will lecture from be the Highwayman's Code.

Football World Cup qualifying play-offs

Irish adventure ends in tears

Michael Walker in Brussels

ONLY when it was all over, and the fans had disappeared from the King Baudouin Stadium, was it possible to absorb the reality that this was in fact a defeat and that the Republic of Ireland were out of the World Cup.

Such was the defiant nature of the Irish performance until then that it was easy to forget that they had actually lost, 2-1 on the night and 3-2 over the two legs. True, the sight of the players at the end, Shay Given sobbing, the others motionless, provided incontrovertible evidence of loss but the urge was nevertheless to applaud them off the field.

The magnificently supportive Irish fans did just that, as did the national coach Mick McCarthy, whose anger at the throw-in decision that had led to Luc Nilis's clinching goal in the 70th minute and frustration with David Connolly after the Feyenoord player was dismissed in the second half for kicking out at Eric Deflandre, quickly melted into sympathy once he had accompanied his distraught players into the dressing room.

At the post-match press conference the Belgium manager George Leekens revealed conflicting emotions of happiness at victory and anxiety about the ill-health of his wife, who has been slipping in and out of a coma for the past year. McCarthy listened sympathetically but, when it came to his turn to answer questions, his frustration came to the surface again. "Clearly it was our throw-in. The decision has cost us our place in the World Cup."

But later, in Dublin, McCarthy was more soothing than seething. "There were a lot of tears in the dressing room, from all of us. I stopped being angry and felt for them, especially for the older players, because it was their last chance of the World Cup."

That realisation had clearly dawned on the Ireland captain Andy Townsend, who immediately after the game announced his retirement from international football. This was probably the last thing McCarthy needed to hear. Even at 34, McCarthy feels, Townsend has a valuable role to play for the Republic.

"I've spoken to Andy, Tony Cascarino and Ray Houghton and asked them to think about it before making a decision," the manager said. "There may be an occasion when we need their experience."



A tearful Irish goalkeeper, Shay Given, after the defeat SPORTSPHOTO

And, in Houghton's case particularly, his ability. He may be 35 and he may have played for only 42 minutes last Saturday but, as soon as he replaced Alan McLoughlin, his familiar industry posed urgent new threats for the opposition. Indeed, it was he who gave the Irish hope with a headed equaliser to Luis Oliveira's first-half strike. But it wasn't to be.

● Jamaica qualifed for the World Cup finals with a 0-0 draw with Mexico. The West Indians needed only a draw but in the end they could have lost and still qualified because their only rivals El Salvador were beaten 4-2 in Boston by the United States.

Chile secured the fourth and final berth from the South American group with a 3-0 defeat of Bolivia.

The qualifiers for France 98 are: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Italy, Jamaica and Japan (both first time), Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Paraguay, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Scotland, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Tunisia, United States and Yugoslavia. The final place will be decided by a play-off between Australia and Iran.

Italy 1 Russia 0

Casiraghi settles it

Jason Tomas

ITALY put the nightmare of their draw with England behind them when they beat Russia 1-0 in Naples to clinch a place in the World Cup finals for the 10th successive time.

After their 1-1 draw in the first-leg play-off in Russia, a goalless draw would have done it. But until Pierluigi Casiraghi scored in the 53rd minute, it seemed likely that nerves would render the Italians increasingly vulnerable.

In his starting line-up, Italy's coach, Cesare Maldini, elected to plump for the physical strength of Fabrizio Ravanelli up front, instead of the ingenuity of Gianfranco Zola and Alessandro Del Piero. In the first half, their creativity was conspicuous by its absence in Italy's performance, although the Russians needed two excellent reflex saves by goalkeeper Sergei Ovchinnikov from Ciro Ferrara and Ravanelli to keep the scoresheet blank.

But then came the superb Casiraghi strike, from a similarly impressive pass threaded through the Russian defence by Demetrio Albertini, which enabled the whole nation to heave a sigh of relief.

Friendly international: England 2 Cameroon 0

Young guns are on target

David Lacey at Wembley

FOR England in the World Cup there is room for qualified optimism. Not just because they have qualified and are feeling optimistic, and certainly not on the strength of last Saturday's 2-0 victory against a Cameroon team who came to Wembley to spar rather than spear, but because Glenn Hoddle is gathering around him players with genuine ability who are not afraid to use it at the highest level.

Sol Campbell, without question the England team's footballer of the year, comes into this category. So do David Beckham and Paul Scholes. The two other Pauls, Ince and Gascoigne, have been there a while longer, and Robbie Fowler did enough to suggest that he will have joined the company by the time the squad leaves for France.

Scholes, who was 23 last Sunday, again showed the maturity and coolness under pressure which distinguished his performances in the Tournoi de France in June. His dink over the keeper made it three goals in five England appearances.

Fowler also did his case a power of good. His second goal for England, a sharp header from Beckham's centre in first-half stoppage time, was only part of the picture. The Liverpool striker also produced the stealth and subtlety of movement that Hoddle had demanded.

Defensively it was hardly a night for making judgments. Nigel Martyn had but one save to make, and that at the second attempt from Geremi Njitap, one of the Cameroon substitutes, five minutes from the final whistle.

Yet the loss of Gareth Southgate with damaged ankle ligaments shortly before half-time did eventually lead to a moment of interesting portent when Rio Ferdinand, the West Ham sweeper who replaced him, strode out from the back and through the middle to lay on a chance for Fowler, who put it over the bar.

Much as Hoddle would like to play with a libero next summer he will not allow his enthusiasm for the idea to override the practical consideration of continuing with the three-man defensive system which so far has served England well.

"We've had a hell of a good defensive record," he said, "and I would be a fool to try to force the issue."

Yet all sorts of things can happen during the three months before England play again. Their next opponents may be Argentina, and that might produce an entirely different set of perspectives.

Football results

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE:
Division One: Bradford 0, Tranmere 1; Charlton 3, Crewe 2; Huddersfld 1, Reading 0; Norwich 1, Middlesbro 3; Nottm For 1, Birmingham 0; Oxford 1, Bury 1; Portsmth 1, Sunderland 4; Port Vale 1, W B A 2; QPR 1, Stoke 1; Sheff Utd 1, Man City 1; Stockport 4, Swindon 2; Wolves 1, Ipswich 1.

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE:
Premier Division: Aberdeen 1, Rangers 1; Celtic 0, Motherwell 2; Dunfrmline 2, Hibs 1; Hearts 2, St Johnstn 1; Kilmarnk 1, Dundee U 3.

First Division: Airdrie 3, Morton 3; Dundee 4, Ayr 0; Hamilton 1, Falkirk 1; Stirling A 2, Partick 2; St Mirren 2, Raith 3.

Division Two: East Fife 2, Clydebank 3; Forfar 2, Queen Sth 4; Livingston 5, Brechin 2; Stenhsmr 0, Clyde 0; Stranraer 2, Inverness Cal 1.

Division Three: Berwick 2, Queens Pk 1; Dumbarton 1, Albion 1; E Stirling 4, Cowdenbeath 0; Montrose 0, Alloa 2; Ross Co 0, Arbroath 0.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Sports academy hits another delay

PROPOSALS for a national academy of sport, described by some observers as "half-baked" when they were first announced, have been given a new lease of life by the Government. Into the pot goes $100 million of National Lottery money on top of the $170 million earmarked by the Conservative government from the same source, plus the addition of three more sports to the curriculum — football, cricket and rugby.

The revamped blueprint was unveiled by the Culture Minister, Chris Smith, after consultations with experts who favour the establishment of a series of satellite centres, as opposed to a single site, feeding a central base to be called the United Kingdom Institute of Sport.

The Minister has given the three organisations who are bidding to manage the central academy, to be based in the East Midlands, Oxfordshire or Sheffield, until Christmas to respond to the plans.

All this means that the planning stages of the project, whose aim is to rejuvenate British sport in time for the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, will have taken more than two years to complete.

Roger Moreland, in charge of the project for the United Kingdom Sports Council, denied that this latest delay represented further dithering. "The structure the Secretary of State has outlined will help us deliver the support services that our sportsmen and women have told us they want," he said.

LEE WESTWOOD is a golfer on a roll. He won the Volvo Masters and $282,000 earlier this month. Then he came second in the Sarazen World Open in Atlanta and collected $244,000, and last Sunday the Englishman picked up another $221,000 by retaining his Sumitomo Taiheiyo Masters at the Gotemba course south of Tokyo. He is now moving on to Miyazaki where nearly $340,000 awaits the winner of the Dunlop Phoenix event.

ENGLAND'S squash players retained the World Team Championship in Kuala Lumpur by white-washing Canada 3-0 in the final. Simon Parke got his side off to a great start with a 9-1, 9-0, 9-0 victory over world No 3 Jonathan Power. Chris Harris then defeated Gary Waite 9-0, 9-3, 9-4, and Del Harris completed the rout with a 9-1, 9-1 win over Graham Rydiong in the dead rubber.

TIM HENMAN won the British national championship for the third time in a row when he defeated Chris Wilkinson 6-1, 6-4 in little more than an hour at Telford. After his quarter-final success, the British No 2 was unexpectedly called up to the ATP World Championship in Hanover. He flew in a private jet, defeated Russia's Yevgeny Kafelnikov 6-4, 6-4 to collect $100,000 and then flew back for his semi-final clash at Telford.

CHRIS ADAMS, the Derbyshire batsman, is set for an auction that may make him the highest-paid cricketer in the land. At least a dozen counties are after his signatures with packages totalling more than $170,000 a year, following a Lord's ruling that makes him a free agent. Adams was been in dispute with Derbyshire where his contract still had a year to run. He tried to buy out the remainder of his time, but the county would not release him. The cricketer was prepared to settle the matter in the courts had he failed in his application to the England and Wales Cricket Board, but they decided he could leave.

CHRIS LEWIS is going back to his roots after signing a five-year contract to play for Leicestershire from next season. The 29-year-old former England all-rounder had been free to talk to other counties following the end of his contract with Surrey. Leicestershire, where he began his cricketing career more than 10 years ago, beat off interest from Northamptonshire and Somerset. Lewis said: "It's nice to be back. I think my best years are ahead of me."

MORE than six years after he walked out on Sheffield Wednesday to take over as manager of Aston Villa, Ron Atkinson has picked up the reins at the south Yorkshire club. Although offered a three-year contract, Atkinson, who has managed several top clubs in his 23-year coaching career, insisted on a short-term contract, happy to be judged on performances from his inherited squad up to the end of this season.

Meanwhile Edgar, Street, home of Vauxhall Conference team Hereford United, witnessed an afternoon of FA Cup glory in the first round of this season's competition. And it was a moment of sweet revenge for the Hereford fans as they saw their side knock out Brighton & Hove Albion, the team which put them out of the league last season, 2-1.